

# CRITIQUE

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THEATRE ARTS AND LITERATURE

*Published three times yearly with ecclesiastical approbation by the  
National Catholic Theatre Conference, Lancaster, N. Y.*

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Volume I

FEBRUARY, 1958

No. 1

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Published February, May, and November by Besig Lithograph, 877 Main Street, Buffalo 3, N. Y., for  
the National Catholic Theatre Conference, Executive Office, Lancaster, New York.

NCTC memberships (subscriber, \$3.00; package subscriber \$5.00; regular \$10.00; sustaining \$25.00;  
life \$100.00) include subscription to CRITIQUE for which \$3.00 is set aside for a year's subscription.  
Single copies \$1.25. All memberships should be sent to the NCTC Executive Office, 142 Laverack Avenue,  
Lancaster, N. Y.

Manuscripts, advertising, and circulation inquiries should be addressed to the Editor, NCTC Editorial  
Office, 136 Sherwood Avenue, Rochester, N. Y. All manuscripts should conform to the Chicago Manual  
of Style.

Second class permit pending at the post office at Lancaster, New York.

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The National Catholic Theatre Conference welcomes the appearance of *CRITIQUE*. It is the answer to a long felt need of the Conference to marshal its intellectual forces in an effort to explore the point at which the timeless intersects with time in the world of theatre.

Few things are as victimized by time as theatre. When the curtain falls, voices once vibrant with life are stilled; and action once vivid with color and movement grows pale in the storehouse of memory. Of its nature, drama is one of the most ephemeral and elusive of the art forms. Whereas graphic and plastic arts achieve permanence by their very completion, drama is active as long as the performing artists are active. When the moment of creation has passed, the work of art is also finished. The only redeeming feature is that drama leaves a deposit of literature.

In drama — whether viewed as an art experience or as literature — there is a lifting of the heart of man toward the timeless, the absolute, the universal. All of the creative energy which is poured into the production of a play is worth the cost if it helps men to achieve the priceless understanding of truth, or goodness, or beauty; for these transcendentals are one in the bosom of the Infinite. It is the viewpoint of *CRITIQUE*, then, that familiarity with the Infinite and Timeless as well as adherence to the Absolute is the best possible norm for evaluating the worth of dramatic art both as an experience and as literature. "In Thy light we shall see light."

Drama criticism, moreover, frequently possesses no vantage point; and the situation is further complicated when there is a lack of vision in the artist. Neither art nor the understanding of art can be served by judging from the murky depths of Freudianism or from the off-tangent positions of astigmatic and blind philosophies. Art, whose very function is to delight us with the intuited vision of reality, can only illuminate and reveal the splendor of being when it accepts the order of reality as it is. In that order God exists as the fullness and font of being and beauty; and man exists as a being stamped in God's image, a being capable of ineffable grandeur and of bottomless perfidy. Only this man—real man, not man the creature of heredity, environment, or sex—can be a fit subject for an art form whose very aim is to delight with the portrayal of human life in action. Granted that fallen man must also be portrayed in his sinfulness, evil must be portrayed for what it really is and in a way which befits the moral dignity and obligations of both the artist and the spectator. Otherwise art, divorced from reality, cannot yield its harvest of beauty.

*CRITIQUE*, then, as a Catholic publication can be of immense service to educational theatre by bringing the luminous certitudes of Faith and scholastic philosophy to the evaluation of the artistic merit of the drama of past and present and, God willing, to the formation of the drama of the future.

*CRITIQUE*, however, will not be limited to the appreciation of dramatic art and literature. In a measure consonant with the great tradition of Catholic intellectuality—a tradition which links such giants of history as Augustine, Bede, Aquinas, More, and Newman—we wish to add our infinitely smaller but nevertheless sincere effort to bring the tools of scholarship and research to the construction of a theatrical culture which will embody a passionate acceptance of the social reign of Jesus Christ. Since there is no human institution or custom which does not owe its homage

to the Savior of the world, we feel that theatre as one of modern man's chief recreations and mediums for the transmission of culture should also be seasoned and leavened with the truth which makes men free, the truth which will free art, and drama in particular, from servitude to idols of falsehood and sensuality.

Catholic theatre, as we understand it, does not necessarily mean theatre written, produced, or acted by Catholics. It is evident that Catholics have at times written and produced theatre which was flawless in its Catholic sensibilities but inferior in its artistic form. We do mean, however, a theatre which is excellent both in its artistry and in its Catholic sensibilities. Granted that we do not exclude as secondary matter all theatre that is both artistic and consistent with or at least non-contradictory to our Faith, our concept of Catholic theatre primarily includes all theatre that is both art in form and distinctively Catholic in its matter and in its mode of presentation. For us, Catholicism is not an awkward addendum to life; it is the wellspring of a life fraught with beauty and joy, a wellspring which must animate all human activity. We do not feel that the Church's contribution to drama was finished with the medieval mystery, miracle and morality play; nor do we believe that religious drama is that type of drama which is designed to stir some vague religious feeling or which is only suitable for presentation in a chancel. Our Catholic theatre is adaptable to the dramatic forms and modes of presentation of all times; only its sensibilities and its values are different.

In view, then, of the demands of an integral Catholicism together with its absolute standards and its tradition of scholarship, there is a need for CRITIQUE. Although we have long served and will continue to serve the practical side of good theatre with our monthly publication, *Catholic Theatre*, the time has come to give the practical deeper root; for art is essentially a virtue of the intelligence. The new magazine will, we trust, develop a body of literature and criticism which will give intelligent direction and purposeful unity to our efforts in the field of educational theatre.

I beg God's blessing on the project and urge the members of the Conference to regard CRITIQUE as our effort to respond to the challenge of the Holy Father. Surely, the words which he spoke of radio, television, and film apply with equal validity to the stage drama which very often feeds these other media: "There is a dual task to be accomplished: avoid all elements of corruption and promote Christian values."

REV. GABRIEL STAPLETON, S.D.S.  
*President*

The cover for CRITIQUE was designed by James H. Donahue, founder and director of Allied Artists Studios, Detroit, Michigan. Mr. Donahue is nationally known as an Art Director and a patron of young artists.



# EUGENE O'NEILL: THE COURSE OF A MODERN DRAMATIST

By JOHN GASSNER

The return of O'Neill to the American stage and the renewed interest his work has aroused in Europe, too, may be a suitable occasion for re-examining his reputation. It was examined once before, by Eric Bentley and others, about a decade ago, but the object of that investigation was to determine in how many ways and with what thoroughness O'Neill's reputation could be undermined. A new generation appeared to be delighted with the denigration of O'Neill even if it had no new culture-hero to put in his place since no playwright of recent years has quite possessed O'Neill's amplitude and passion. In the face of the onslaught of the critics, his friends and admirers could only reflect that the young men had few opportunities to see O'Neill's plays in adequate stage productions and that nothing charged against his work was really new. We—I refer to those of us who had followed his star in the nineteen-twenties and early thirties—had known his power in the theatre, and it had been sufficient to compensate for his literary defects. With the triumphant Circle-in-the-Square "off-Broadway" revival of *The Iceman Cometh* and the impressive "Broadway" success of *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, the return of O'Neill to favor and his power over new audiences must have become apparent even to his detractors. In the season of 1956-1957, he was represented on the New York stage by no less than five productions. It is no longer necessary, therefore, to defend America's major playwright—at least for the time being.

It is now necessary only to examine him with a view to striking a just balance between merit and defect. And with any such examination we are also bound to arrive at some determination of his character as modern dramatist. He has represented virtually everything that is modern about the American theatre and reflected all that has been modern about the European theatre in his restless experimentation, his avid cultivation of so-called new ideas, his rampant individualism, and his intense unease. In O'Neill's case, we may say, that he was most modern when his writing was most personal, and that both his success and defeat paralleled the course of our modernity. The success was that of the restless spirit honest enough to refuse to feel or think by rote, and the effect was often as provocative as a leading question and as exciting, if also as risky, as a plunge down a waterfall. The defeat may be summed up as an almost continual straining, some awkwardness in specific communication, and a negativeness and desolation more conducive to darkness than light in the

Based on an address given at the University of Detroit on October 11, 1957. Mr. Gassner, author of many works on the theatre, is Sterling Professor of Playwriting and Dramatic Literature at Yale University as well as drama critic for the *Educational Theatre Journal* and other publications.

work of art. By O'Neill's "modernity," I mean, of course, the tendencies and attributes associated, whether favorably or unfavorably, with the drama since the late eighteen-seventies when the influence of Ibsen began to be felt. And in the theatre, I need hardly add, modernity soon became two-sided, so that "anti-realism" (I refer to the "symbolists," "expressionists," and "theatricalists") belongs to it no less than "realism" does.

Without a doubt, O'Neill dignified the craft of playwriting in America, made it a calling rather than a trade, and gave playwrights, hitherto hacks or entertainers but never oracles, a position of some importance in our cultural life. Winner of the Nobel Prize and author of plays staged in virtually all the capitals of Europe, he was our first dramatist of international standing. And though his power exceeded his skill on many an occasion, his skill was sufficient to carry him through some of the most ambitious projects attempted in the theatre since Aeschylus wrote his trilogies twenty-four hundred years ago. O'Neill represented the *avant-garde* in our country and in Europe forty years ago, and his banner is still to be seen fluttering in the vanguard. It is not too much to say that even our most venturesome writers of present-day theatre are, on the whole, discreet technicians by comparison with him. Spokesman for the experimental Little Theatre movement led by his own play-producing organization, the Provincetown Players of Greenwich Village, and after 1920 also spokesman for the progressive wing of Broadway professionalism, O'Neill sparked an artistic revolt of great moment. It was essentially a revolt against a pallid and prissy pseudo-realism in the theatre. And it led this mettlesome playwright into virtually every channel of dramatic modernism with which we are familiar. Only the extremes of dadaism and surrealism found him apathetic; and only a theatricalism void of content, a "theatricalism for the sake of theatricalism," so to speak, seemed alien to his nevertheless distinctly theatrical genius. O'Neill also expressed a general reaction against Victorian mores, especially against the Puritanism and "Protestant ethic" associated with American Victorianism, ranging himself in this respect on the side of the rebels of his generation led by Van Wyck Brooks and Randolph Bourne. Combined with a deeply-felt, if also fashionably bohemian, protest against middle-class complacencies, machine-worship, dollar-idolatry, and the entire cult of opportunism and materialism, O'Neill's stand placed him in the forefront of those who began to "moderize" the content of American drama no less than its form. And both the content and the form were further modernized by his response to the spread of Freudianism or "depth-psychology" that led to his attempting to externalize subconscious pressures. The means he adopted for this purpose alone carried him into areas of experimentation where only venturesome playwrights dared enter and only exceptionally skilful ones could survive. His technical resourcefulness was rich enough to include the successful use of hallucinatory drama in *The Emperor Jones*, "interior monologues" in *Strange Interlude*, a "Doppelganger" technique in *Days Without End* (in which two actors had to play the same character), and masks objectifying psychological drama in *The Great God Brown*.

In one respect or another, then, O'Neill's career compels us to conclude that we could not take him less seriously than we did, for his struggles with form and content were singularly intense and imaginative. More than any other writer in the Amer-

ican theatre he endeavored to give range and significance to the dramatic medium which had heretofore been employed for the commercialization of entertainment. This endeavor alone would have justified our sense of indebtedness to him and our readiness to place him in the company of the European pioneers of modern theatre. But there was indeed still another quality that distinguished him, a quality that may elude precise definition but is none the less primary in the impression left by the man and the playwright. We might say that, almost alone among our professional playwrights, O'Neill possessed a sense of integrity and self-immolating artistry he never betrayed.

Moving darkly through the maze of the modern world, he refused to be comforted by the enticements of a society of material abundance. Nor did he accept solace from the promises of Liberal meliorism or from the messianism of the Marxist movements that attracted many of his fellow-writers at one time or another in our decades of confused transition. He was not oblivious of social reality from the days of his youth when he wrote Socialist poetry to the later years when he flayed materialism with the satire of *Marco Millions*. But O'Neill allowed nothing to deflect him from his sense of the absolute—the absolute concern with the condition humaine, always desperate but particularly so, to his mind, in modern times.

Another way of describing his compulsion to wrestle with the angel—and O'Neill was one of the most "compelled" of playwrights—is to say that he was loyal to a tragic sense of life. He was a natural tragedian, even if it is possible to question whether any particular play of his quite lived up to the high standards we have set for tragedy, and whether his forte was not "tragicality" rather than tragedy. But even if we were to agree with the critics who believe that his work in lacking poetry and elevation falls short of the noble estate of tragedy, we cannot legitimately deny his work a tragic ambience and tragic mood. We cannot ignore the fact that, like the masters of tragedy, he looked intensely into the soul of man and that he saw humanity under the aspect of eternity, so to speak. And, above all, we must acknowledge the nobility of his discontent and the power of his sense of doom; we must grant him the integrity of his despair. Although a frequently amiable person whose sense of humor (and it was often sturdy, if not indeed raffish) has been insufficiently acknowledged, O'Neill could never abide complacency. In the interview he gave to the press on the eve of the premiere of the Theatre Guild's production of *The Iceman Cometh* in September 1946, he reaffirmed his position by calling the United States the "greatest failure" in the world . . . The reason was "the everlasting game of trying to possess your own soul by possessing something outside of it, too," and America with its immense resources had been especially tempted to play that game. "This was really said in the Bible much better," he added. "We are the greatest example of 'For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' We had so much and could have gone either way . . ." And O'Neill proceeded to enlarge his indictment to include the whole human race, concluding that "if humanity failed to appreciate the secret of happiness contained in that simple sentence," it was time to "dump" the human race "down the nearest drain and let the ants have a chance."

O'Neill, in short, produced an impression of greatness by virtue of the absolute demands he made upon life and an acute awareness of humanity's failures to realize his demands. His aim was to make the theatre express a high, almost Luciferian, aspiration exceeded only by a sense of calamity that sometimes amounted to a sense of damnation. For O'Neill belonged to the few "Faustians" of modern literature—such as Dostoevsky, Strindberg, and Kafka—for whom the state of damnation was a psychological reality rather than a convenient religious fiction.

It is true, of course, that O'Neill sometimes appeared to be aiming too consciously at greatness. His mammoth dramas and troglodyte tragedies can arouse this suspicion. And in the pursuit of magnitude, he fell into some errors of taste and tact. He certainly tended to pile up his catastrophic situations and schematize his dramatic conceptions. He labored much in his most ambitiously conceived pieces such as *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*. But apparently the labor in his work had to show before the work could be impressive at all. He was not the man for finesse; his temperament appears to have had little use for it. And whenever there is truth or depth of experience in the plays it is perhaps futile to wish that he had composed them less repetitively and insistently; their emotional power is bound up with their massiveness. O'Neill's blunt talent is often formidable. It may embarrass his admirers, but it tends to reduce his detractors to impotence once they leave the library. It is true, above all, that O'Neill presented the extreme challenge to the commercial theatre of the English-speaking world that only one other playwright, Sean O'Casey, did in recent decades; he challenged the theatre to rise to both his reasonable and unreasonable expectations for dramatic art. Intent upon having his say regardless of consequences to dramatic form or length, O'Neill became one of those rare playwrights with whom the practical theatre has been forced to come to terms in every period that has pretensions to significance in the history of the stage.

2.

When we examine the career of this tenacious playwright we discover indeed that he traversed the field occupied by all the major modern dramatists. Ibsen, Strindberg, Shaw, Hauptmann, Pirandello, O'Casey, and O'Neill pursued practically the same course. Each playwright made his career a determined quest for personal dramatic expression. In O'Neill the search was for many things. It was for utilization of the new materials supplied by the thought of the age, for forms of drama capable of expressing these materials more vividly than Ibsen-inspired realism has expressed them, and for the acquisition of values conspicuously associated with the theatre in its few periods of preeminence.

Of the "materials" not much remains to be said; they have already been touched upon by my reference to Freudian psychology and social thought. The rest of the substance of "modernism" to which O'Neill gave attention consisted of the now shopworn ideas of naturalism and scientism, the mechanistic and deterministic substitutes for the concept of a world governed and made meaningful by faith in divine

providence. On O'Neill's behalf it is necessary, however, to add one major qualification. It is the fact that this "modernism" of content in his work was not in his case a sign of complacency. He was not content in unbelief. "Modernism" did not solve any fundamental problems for him. Nor did it unriddle the world for him as it supposedly did for shallower men beginning with the vogue of Zola and Ernst Haeckel, the German naturalist whose *Riddle of the Universe* was the intellectuals' Bible in O'Neill's youth.

Of the search for dramatic form, I shall have only slight occasion to speak again, but I would not want us to forget that strenuous experimentation was a symptom of his drive for self-expression at all costs. In his personalization of the dramatic medium O'Neill, like Strindberg and Williams, is characteristically modern. As for his search for "values," a term that would be ostentatious when applied to most of his fellow-playwrights, it is apparent that he aimed at the magnitude of theme and treatment present in the great ages of the theatre, especially in the age of Greek tragedy. (Its masterpieces had left a strong imprint on his imagination.) He sought that magnitude, moreover, not as an imitator but as a freely creative artist. That Greek drama furnishes the basis of *Mourning Becomes Electra* is apparent, and it is possible to detect the Hippolytus theme in *Desire Under the Elms*. But the classic manner is barely visible in O'Neill's plays, in which modern psychology is apt to take the place of the classic Fate, and the dialogue of the characters is generally casual and often indeed painstakingly, if not painfully, plain. Yet, for all that (and even at the risk of some fulsomeness and sometimes the danger of being "serious" about relatively trivial people), he attained dramatic expansiveness and frequent elevation of feeling in his plays.

We do not come close enough to O'Neill's particular genius, however, until we notice its source in personal suffering. The pain of alienation that is so prominent in his work is only dimly present, for instance, in the tragedies of Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Racine. They possessed the inestimable balm of great poetry, of course. But this is not the sole reason for their power to radiate light as well as heat and to attain a healing power rarely discernible in O'Neill's work. They were implicitly as well as explicitly affirmative whereas O'Neill elected negativeness. When, after the 1920 production of *Beyond the Horizon*, the elder O'Neill said to his son, "Are you trying to send your audience home to commit suicide?", there was a point to the question. Pessimism and the tragic spirit (which is ultimately affirmative) are at war in the works of O'Neill. There are plays (*The Iceman Cometh* is a conspicuous example) in which the playwright appears to have to put a premium on desperation or, as in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, to have even become self-indulgent in misery. He appears to have had the Jacobean playwrights' taste for morbidity, although I believe that he was mordant in his commentary on life rather than morbid, and that his mordancy was chiefly a determined protest against the optimism of shallow people irritatingly at ease in Zion. And in his immense discontent, we may discern the overriding honesty of a writer who refused to resolve impasses he believed could not be resolved or to reconcile contradictions in life when he could find no means for conciliation. "Sure I'll write about happiness," he declared in an interview in



1922, "if I can happen to meet up with that luxury" and he went on to maintain that he found a compensating exaltation in writing tragedy. ("A work of art," he said, "is always happy: all else is unhappy.") But all these qualifications cannot quite remove an impression of incompleteness produced by much of his work—an incompleteness of tragedy, if you will, reflecting perhaps an incompleteness in the playwright himself.

O'Neill expresses a keen sense of loss quite aside from the usual awareness of the errors and evils of human life found in tragic literature. And it is hardly a secret that the source of his special sense of desolation is associated with a loss of faith on the part of an introspective man who had been born and reared a Catholic. He was a determined individualist who, unable to attach himself to the social causes that won the allegiance of many intellectuals in his time, did not possess compensatory convictions. O'Neill gave continual evidence of traumatic experience, and the loss of religious faith was an important part of it. He himself made much of the problem in *Dynamo* and *Days Without End*. The sense of lostness in his work appeared especially in conjunction with other experiences of separation such as his early family conflicts. We find in O'Neill a keen sense of loss of connection—of connection with God, Nature, society, family, and father.

O'Neill's ambivalence is certainly no longer a secret from anyone. He set it down, dramatizing its source in the family-situation with rough tenderness and candor, when he wrote *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. This play written late in his career is explicit about the ambivalences projected and symbolized in many of the earlier plays. In this above all he was a characteristically modern dramatist—that he was a divided man and was keenly aware of the division not only in himself but in his fellowmen. And like his favorite modern playwright, Strindberg, he made the division itself the subject of his playwriting and the object of his critical approach to modern life and the human condition in general. He tried to master the division with his dramatic art, and because the enterprise was no small matter he was doomed, it would seem, to constantly repeat the effort. He had to repeat the struggle for unity because he could not conclude it successfully. Had he been a shallow man and a facile writer he might have settled for half a satisfaction. Had he been an essentially irreligious man, he might not have had any religious struggles at all. Had he been an unloving man, he might have been content with the gregariousness that passes for love among low-voltage individuals. The tensions in his work are nearly always connected with his struggle against alienation. The secret of his dramatic intensity is to be found not in his theatricality but in his inability to resign himself to an arid view and way of life. He simply could not be at ease, unlike many slick or so-called sophisticated writers, in a world without God, without love, and without a trust in life for which he had a zest darkened but never destroyed by his formal pessimism.

It rests with the critic, of course, to test these generalizations by considering O'Neill's plays individually, which it is impossible to do here. At best only a rapid review can be attempted. But it is apparent, for one thing, that the theme of division was not only much in favor with the playwright, but that it was being constantly objectified by his theatrical imagination. O'Neill was apt to "split" his characters frequently. Thus the artist-hero, surely a projected image of the author himself, appears as a divided man in *The Great God Brown*. His name is Dion Anthony, and he is as schizoid as the name would suggest. One part of him belongs to Dionysus and is life-loving, passionate, even lustful, and creative, while the other part of him belongs to St. Anthony and is inhibitive, for it is pervaded by a sense of sin and is inclined to denial of the flesh. In *Days Without End*, produced eight years later, the man of the world John Loving has two selves intended to be played by separate actors—a sophisticated, cynical self and a suppressed personality that is "loving"; it longs for and elects goodness. Since one self can survive only through the elimination of the other, the spiritual self rises beside the cross as the sole true person only when its Mephistophelian double falls dead at the conclusion of this play. Divided personalities had also appeared in contrasted forms in earlier plays—in *The Emperor Jones*, *The Hairy Ape*, and *Strange Interlude*, but never before so specifically as separate characters in a conflict between belief and unbelief. *Days Without End*, presented by the Theatre Guild early in 1934, was the last new play of O'Neill's that Broadway was to see until a dozen years later when *The Iceman Cometh* opened in September 1946.

The season of 1933-34 seemed to mark the end of O'Neill's trauma of division. It appeared to resolve as well his protracted conflict with the fathers—a conflict directly represented in *Desire Under the Elms*, *Dynamo*, *Strange Interlude*, and *Mourning Becomes Electra*. O'Neill had ostensibly become reconciled with the actual and symbolic fathers who represented religion, the social order, and the conventions in his work. In *Days Without End*, the reconciliation was with God. In *Ah, Wilderness*, the genial period-comedy of O'Neill's boyhood that had appeared earlier in the same theatrical season, the reconciliation was with a worldly father, the small-town editor Nat Miller who watches over his son's adolescence with amused tolerance. It seemed as if O'Neill's twenty-year war with the "fathers" had terminated. But the end was not yet; the war was resumed in the plays written subsequently, and the rift between O'Neill and the world appeared to have actually grown wider. He was at odds with life once more in *The Iceman Cometh*, in which he contended that only illusions could make it endurable. He showed its hopelessness with both sentimental and ironic overtones in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, and he made disillusionment the primal family drama in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*.

These plays have made it plain that O'Neill remained the dramatist of failure and alienation to the very end of his career. It was as if he himself were the scene and center of dramatic conflicts that could be allayed perhaps but never resolved without some visitation, some experience on the road to Damascus, that never came

to him. Peace of the spirit had come after great turbulence to his favorite modernist, Strindberg; therefore it is possible that O'Neill once expected it for himself, too. But it is evident that once he saw the world going from bad to worse after 1934 he found justification for the very worst construction he had put on the nature and destiny of the human species. It used to be reported during the period of the second World War—how accurately I have not been able to ascertain—that O'Neill's depression over the state of the world was so great that he allowed days to go by without rising from his bed.

Still, the source of the anguish in the late plays as in the early ones was personal, not political. If his plays had a larger reference than personal grief, the credit belongs to his creative imagination. He had the true artist's power of imaginative projection without which it is impossible to write significant drama. He also had the self-regard or egocentricity of men of romantic sensibility, such as Byron and Goethe who made the world a reflection of their own spiritual condition. He perceived the world primarily through his temperament and mood. Division in himself became division in the rest of the world and when angry with the unsteady world he could have borrowed Othello's words to Desdemona,

..... when I love thee not,  
Chaos is come again.

Whenever we are inclined to consider O'Neill overwrought—and one of his minor critics<sup>1</sup> even referred to his "melodramadness," a charge approved by a major critic, St. John Ervine—it will be well to remember that the secret of O'Neill's emotional power lies largely in his sense of significant torment. If he strained so much, it was partly because his subject-matter frequently had symbolic dimension for him. The loneliness of sailors in the *S.S. Glencairn* sea-pieces was the loneliness of man in the universe, and the disorientation of Yank, "the hairy ape," was man's severance from the world of nature. Yank, for O'Neill, was "the symbol of man who has lost his old harmony with nature, the harmony he used to have as an animal and has not yet acquired in a spiritual way." Unable to move forward toward complete humanity, Yank dies in the course of his attempt to return to the animal state while shaking hands with the gorilla he has freed from its cage in the Zoo. In a play filled with naturalistic dialogue as primitive as the mentality of Yank and his fellow-stokers, O'Neill still had in mind only the larger meaning. "The subject," he said, "is the same one that always was and always will be the one subject for drama, and that is man and his struggle with his fate. The struggle used to be with the gods, but is now with himself, his own past, his attempt 'to belong'."<sup>2</sup> Anna Christie's father is continually conscious of the irony of fate and of a malevolence in the nature of things that the old sailor associates with the "old devil sea." And in succumbing to primal fears in the jungle, "Emperor Jones" reenacts the whole drama of atavism, the drama of humanity's inability to escape the ghosts of the racial past.

1) Virgil Geddes, *The Melodramadness of Eugene O'Neill*, a pamphlet, published in 1934. A favorable comment on it was made by St. John Ervine in the column he used to write for the *London Observer* during the nineteen-thirties.

2) See the article O'Neill published in the November 16, 1924 issue of the *New York Herald Tribune*.

Play after play, reflected O'Neill's disinterest in literalness and dissatisfaction with the "naturalism" he scorned as "holding the family kodak up to ill-nature" and favoring "the banality of surfaces." It was the deep experience and the large frame of reference that interested him. It is true enough that his symbolism and resonance contrasted noticeably with the low condition of most of his heroes and with the commonplaceness of their dialogue. Characters such as Chris Christopherson, Yank, Orin, and Hickey, the salesman in *The Iceman Cometh*, are anything but Promethean figures. And there is certainly little Promethean fire on their lips. (It is idle to repeat that O'Neill did not write distinguished prose and was rarely capable of poetic utterance.) But they are frequently involved in situations that transcend their actual condition or environment. They rise in stature with their awareness of a gambit greater than their own, as well as with the intensity of their reaction to their fate. Nor is it possible to forget that O'Neill himself is speaking through them. It is his largeness of tragic feeling that gives them their magnitude.

An amplitude of tragic perception appears even in so intimate a family drama as *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. As family drama alone it is patently repetitive and labored; those who respond to it solely as a naturalistic "slice-of-life" are well entitled to their reservations. But there is more to *Long Days Journey Into Night* than that. The line of development in the play is the young O'Neill's introduction to a tragic view of life through his disenchantment with his family. The crisis of his mother's return to drug-addiction, as well as the necessity of his entering a sanatorium for tubercular patients, casts a merciless spotlight on his parents and brother. His experience shows him the many-sided truth about the human condition and strengthens his awareness of the lostness of men and the ironic pathos of their contradictions. The family, we may say, is the microcosm through which the artist as a young man gets his first hard look at the macrocosm. The first "hard look" is also romantic, recalling the doldrums of the "lost" generation of the eighteen-nineties; the young O'Neill broods on the lachrymose poetry of Ernest Dowson.\* But we know that the look grew harder in the course of O'Neill's career, even if he never quite escaped some degree of *fin de siècle* moodiness.

The alienation, the sense of tragic isolation, announced in this play but actually expressed in most of the plays that preceded it for more than two decades is the final clue to O'Neill's course as a modern dramatist. The rift in the source and substance of his plays is reflected by the rifts in his playwriting. O'Neill's divided artistry has long been apparent, and it will have to count importantly in any final appraisal of his achievement. In briefest review, we may notice the discrepancy between his vaulting intentions and his lagging execution, his intense action and his prosy dialogue, his introspection and his theatricality, his penchant for tragedy and addiction to psychopathology, and the many fluctuations in his dramatic style. On the one hand, he was programmatically opposed to "realism" or "naturalism" and

\*) Appropriately, too, the adolescent hero of *Ah, Wilderness*, the action of which transpires at the turn of the century, quotes Omar Khayyam.

aside from favoring symbolism and symbolist atmosphere, he resorted to the expressionist technique of grotesque distortion in a number of plays, such as *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape*. Nevertheless, these and other means of stylization did not actually reveal him in the fullness of his power. He turned away from them, and often his most powerful work was done in the realistic or naturalistic vein of *Desire Under the Elms*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Ah, Wilderness*, *The Iceman Cometh*, and *A Long Day's Journey Into Night*. O'Neill's dramatic writing was divided between imaginative flights and traffic with the gritty ground, and his rootedness was generally preferable to his fancies, his "earthiness" to his "poetry."

O'Neill, in brief, was not what we would call an integrated artist. His interest and power in the theatre were derived, on the contrary, from his dividedness. (The exception is, of course, the sunny comic artistry of *Ah, Wilderness*.) The alienation in his dramatic talent had shock value, it was "provocative," and it commanded respect for the honesty of a writer who had the courage of his discontent. If this talent failed to carry him to the eminence of the great playwrights of the past, and if it left room for very mixed reactions to his work, this much can be said with reasonable accuracy: Alienation was the cross O'Neill had to bear, and proudly (perhaps too proudly) chose to bear. And O'Neill carried it further into the theatre than any other modern playwright after Strindberg. No other dramatist of our century has thus far been able to reach his dark and disturbing impressiveness, and no amount of astute criticism has yet invalidated at least this much claim for his labors — the labors, one might say, of a modern Sisyphus in a modern Tartarus.



# THE ILLEGITIMATE ART

An Apology To and For American Musical Theatre

By GEORGE HERMAN

## The Question Of The Family Name

*"How convenient it would be to many of our great men and great families of doubtful origin, could they have the privilege of the heroes of yore, who, whenever their origin was involved in obscurity, modestly announced themselves descended from a God."*

Washington Irving

Knickerbocker's History of New York

In a theatrical season on Broadway which saw the latest, if not the best, efforts of our leading American playwrights such as O'Neill, Williams, and Miller, it is surprising that the most popular production was not *Long Day's Journey Into Night* or *Orpheus Descending* or *View From The Bridge*; but a musical adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Of the long-run productions that lasted through the summer, six of the ten were musicals<sup>1</sup>—and three of these had received only mixed notices from the critics.

Further, there is a great rush at present to adapt anything and everything into this popular form of musical theatre. It has "drawn on authors as disparate as Molnar, Steinbeck, Giraudoux, Mark Twain and even Homer."<sup>2</sup> This season Moliere will be adapted into musical comedy once more. Shakespeare and Pagnol have become members of this "adapted circle."

The popularity of American musicals has lured the top playwrights and composers to work in this field.

"There are two good reasons for a playwright to venture into musical theatre, and one is money. Although the author's percentage is considerably lower than on a straight play, the gross of a musical is considerably higher; and, in general, musicals run much longer than plays—hits, flops, or in-betweens."<sup>3</sup>

\* But the most reassuring commentary on the wide acceptance of this form of "musical comedy" are the ever-increasing number of inquiries that reach me for information about musicals available for inexperienced voices, shadowy budgets, and untrained directors in Catholic colleges and high schools. More and more scholars are examining the field, and there have been at least three excellent dissertations on this field since 1946.<sup>4</sup>

It is becoming evident that the one-time "illegitimate art" of musical comedy is, at last, being recognized as an art form worthy of production and study in our Catholic institutions.

1 *Bells Are Ringing*, *Happy Hunting*, *Li'l Abner*, *New Girl In Town*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Most Happy Fella*, *Damn Yankees*. *Damn Yankees*, of course, was a hold-over from two seasons past.

2 Kenneth Tynan, "Broadway Set To Music," *Holiday Magazine*, (October, 1956), page 88.

3 Arthur Laurents, "A Musical Adventure," *The New York Times*, (November 3, 1957), page 1.

4 Sr. Mary Eileen Coyne, S.S.J., "Main Trends In Musical Comedy" (Unpublished M.A. dissertation, Dept. of Speech and Drama, Catholic University of America, 1951); W. T. Chichester, "The American Musical Comedy" (Unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1946); and Elaine Freeman Davis, "Major Trends In Contemporary Musical Comedy" (Unpublished M.A. dissertation, Stanford University, 1949.)

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But why did it take so long? Why is this form of musical theatre attracting the attention of Catholic scholars and educators now — within the past ten years especially?

I submit two reasons. The first is a solidification of the form itself in recent years. Prior to the last decade the form was indefinable. Terminology was often vague, confusing, and contradictory.

For example: Webster defines "opera" as a "drama wholly or partly sung" and distinguishes between "Grand opera" which has "a plot elaborated as in serious drama," and "Comic opera" which has "spoken, often farcical, dialogue between the musical numbers." An "operetta" has "an inconsequential plot, cheerful music, and spoken dialogue." Immediately there is a question as to what constitutes an "operetta" and what a "comic opera." They both have spoken dialogue.

"Musical comedy," on the other hand, is distinguishable by its "slender plot." Apparently the question of whether a work is an operetta or a musical-comedy depends on whether you consider the plot "inconsequential" or merely "slender."

Nor are the professionals any assistance in terminology. Leonard Bernstein, composer of *Candide*, *Wonderful Town*, and *West Side Story*, declared last year on a nationally televised lecture on musical-comedy that the form required a score written "in the jazz idiom." This would disqualify *Fanny* whose musical idiom is French, and *My Fair Lady* whose musical idiom is English music hall. Further, it could label *Porgy And Bess* as a "musical-comedy."

The stage director of the Metropolitan Opera defines an "opera" as "any form of musical theatre in which the use of the voice and orchestra is not incidental, but of essential importance in developing the story and the characters."<sup>1</sup> *Fanny*, then, would be an opera. But Wagner defined "opera" as a "dramatic-musical improvisation of perfected poetic value embodied in a fixed form by the highest artistic thought,"<sup>2</sup> and it is doubtful that any contemporary musical-comedy could live up to that definition!

J. Walker McSpaden, whose work is considered by many to be the best in the field, says, "Musical Comedy . . . is a grade below the true Light Opera."<sup>3</sup> But he defines neither. He classifies *Me And Juliet*, *Wonderful Town*, and *Brigadoon* as "musical plays"; and *Guys And Dolls* as "musical comedy." *Porgy And Bess* becomes "folk opera," and *Song of Norway* is an "operetta."

Sister Mary Eileen credits Walter Kerr with the definition: "Operetta has a Menander or domestic comedy base, while musical comedy is the farce or Aristophanic type of comedy."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, *My Fair Lady* could be an "operetta."

And so it goes. Richard Strauss' *Rosenkavalier* was called "a comedy for music"; and Monteverdi called his *Orfeo* a "fable in music." Opera has been defined as a form of musical theatre in which "everything is sung." But where would that leave *Carmen* with its dialogue passages?

As for "musical comedy," we can't even agree as to whether or not it gets hypenated!

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Graf, *Opera For The People* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951), page 21.

<sup>2</sup> Barret H. Clark (Ed.), *European Theories of the Drama* (New York: Crown Publishers, revised 1947), page 350.

<sup>3</sup> J. Walker McSpadden, *Operas And Musical Comedies* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 4th printing, 1954), page 253.

<sup>4</sup> Sr. Mary Eileen Coyne, S.S.J., op. cit., page 1.

A good deal of this confused terminology has been due to "pre-conceived defining." Starting with a theory based on actual observation of a supposedly representative bloc of musicals, the scholar would try to incorporate as many as possible under "his" category; and those that did not fit became different "art forms." One of the problems of solidifying musical theatre terminology has been the wide variety of "styles" of musicals—although there remains a hard core of similarities that suggest one genre.

I submit that this genre might possibly be "opera."

It is true that the American public has developed an aversion to the word "opera." For one thing, it connotes a foreign tongue, and we "who like to understand what we are hearing, (find) these operas in English . . . welcome. The music is more enjoyable when we comprehend the word."<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the vocal embellishments of Italian opera have made most Americans consider it "pretentious" and "arty." This aversion was a part of the general rebellion against the intellectual and "eggheadism." And the result was a grouping of all opera under one unpleasant heading: "grand opera."

Small wonder, then, there is a hesitancy about labeling a musical work, no matter how profound and sensitive, as "opera."

But, in the past twenty years, the American public has come culturally of age, and the educators began to see in this field of "musical comedy," genuine value as "near-operas." With the introduction of twice as much music in *Most Happy Fella* and twice as much dance in *West Side Story*, American musical theatre has approached the definition of Webster's "wholly or mostly sung." And we might add, for the purposes of American musical theatre, ". . . or danced."

The realization that the works of Broadway were more than "musical comedies" was apparent to Oscar Hammerstein, II, way back in 1925 when he said:

"I have an extravagant theory that little light opera . . . can be so developed that he can come in at the back door and give his big brother, grand opera, a stiff battle for artistic honors."<sup>2</sup>

And, of late, Mr. Graf has stated boldly:

" . . . Broadway has its own opera. Not the pretentious grand opera of the European tradition, associated with the Metropolitan, but a sort of American folk opera."<sup>3</sup>

Rudolph Bing realized it:

"It (Oklahoma!) greatly impressed me with American technique in staging musical drama—the combining of ballet and singing and action and plot development. Is not this—although on a more complicated scale—what Verdi and Puccini and Mozart and Wagner were trying to do?"<sup>4</sup>

It was the striking contrast of the simplicity in the Broadway musical theatre with the complexity of the European operatic traditions that led to Gian-Carlo Menotti's caustic statement: ". . . the Metropolitan Opera has turned into a respectable and dignified museum,"<sup>5</sup> and indirectly gave birth to what I consider the American form of opera.

<sup>1</sup> Howard Dietz, "An Introduction To *La Boheme* In English," *Theatre Arts Magazine* (December, 1953), page 34.

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Hammerstein II, "Voices Versus Feet," *Theatre Arts Magazine*, (May, 1925), page 70.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Graf, *op. cit.*, page 133.

<sup>4</sup> Maurice Zolotow, "This Is Bing," *Theatre Arts Magazine* (December, 1953), page 66.

<sup>5</sup> Nelson Lansdale, "Menotti Calls The Met A Museum," *Theatre Arts Magazine*, (May, 1952), page 30

There is much less confusion and more clarity of purpose when we label the efforts of Broadway as "American opera." The work is then "light opera" or "grand opera" depending on the nature of the plot. Comedy, farce, fantasy, and whimsey would be "light," and tragedy and melodrama would be "grand opera." The distinctions are then in the quality and treatment of the work. The better the integration of the European and American elements of opera, the better the work. This would do away with such vague terms as "musical comedy," "play with music," "musical play," or the very broad, "new musical."

What does it matter what we call this musical theatre?

First, by so elevating the illegitimate art of musical comedy to its proper place as "American light opera," we can also trace the elements that go into this form that makes it distinct from its European counterparts; and that in turn suggests a methodology for the study and examination of this form in American high schools and colleges.

Secondly, it can help the creator to create and the critic to evaluate American musical theatre. American opera maintains certain traits that are strictly nationalistic and could only arise from our folk lores and traditions. There are valid differences between French, German, and Italian opera, and all are basically nationalistic. If the American composer-author-poet is made aware of what traits are predominantly our own, and what we have "borrowed," it would serve him as a valuable tool.

And the critic would have a more clearly defined yardstick by which to measure the quality of the musical.

In order to classify American musical comedy as "opera," we must trace the similar elements between our musical theatre and the European.

In order to distinguish between our forms, we must examine the elements incorporated into our "opera" by the slow evolution of musical comedy from its Broadway inception.

## II

### The Heritage Of The Illegitimate Art

*"Of ancient race by birth, but nobler yet in his own worth . . ."*

John Dryden

Absalom And Achitophel

American opera has a rich heritage both in the European forms of opera and in the folk customs and tastes of our own country.

"American musicals are the best there are . . . Two separate phenomena in the last decade on Broadway brought this about. One was Tin Pan Alley growing up . . . willing to pick up a hint or two from the Metropolitan. The other was the frontal assault from the neighborhood of Carnegie Hall by the writers of serious music."<sup>1</sup>

It is certainly true that some of the elements that have gone into the makeup of the American musical theatre were due solely to the evolutionary process on Broadway. But, in justice, we must also acknowledge the contributions of European opera.

And while it is equally true that some people consider that "American musicals are the best there are," we must also, in humility, correct the erroneous opinion that musical comedy or American opera was our own invention.

<sup>1</sup> Charles Friedman, "Toward American Opera," *Theatre Arts Magazine* (June, 1953), page 33.

"We cannot claim any originality in the field of light opera . . . Although men like Victor Herbert and De Koven have written as beautiful operettas as have come out of Vienna and England, they have been only off-shoots of the Old World. Even in musical comedy we are not original. This unwelcome child of music was invented by George Edwardes of London to pacify young bloods who found themselves incapable of reaching the theatre on time."<sup>1</sup>

In order to facilitate the process of tracing the elements we have "borrowed" from European operatic forms, I have devised a greatly simplified chart of the evolution of our opera.<sup>2</sup>

I begin this chart with the early 17th-century school of "*nuove musiche*"—the theoretical birthplace of opera. This term, borrowed from a collection of songs by Giulio Caccini, was applied to the works of a group of Florentine noblemen called the *Camerata*.

From the combined efforts of two members of this group, Rinuccini and Peri, came the first opera, *Dafne*, and the second, *Euridice*, which also listed Caccini as a collaborator. It was performed in 1600 for the festival honoring the wedding of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV of France, and it introduced two elements of operatic form: the *recitative*, or dramatic declamation whose melodic line is of secondary importance and which follows the free rhythm of the prose text; and the *aria* or solo song, which in the early Baroque period had the simplest kind of chordal accompaniments.<sup>3</sup>

This movement spread to three cities in Italy which added their own regional characteristics to their "operas." The Venetian school used popular tunes extensively, short *arias*, and introduced *ritornelli* or instrumental sections within *arias*. The Roman school introduced *intermezzi*—the use of comic scenes interpolated among the scenes of serious drama. The Neapolitan school developed a sense of musical form rather than dramatic truth, and was characterized by vocal embellishments, florid writing, and *coloratura*. Virtuosity was the keynote. It was "singers' opera."

The Venetian school directly influenced the French opera which added two nationalistic tendencies, a love of spectacle and scenery, and a love of dance. This form led indirectly to the "Spectacle Opera," and ultimately to the form we know as the "American musical revue."

Combined, the Venetian and Roman schools of opera gave birth to comic opera in its various forms, among them the English Ballad Opera, the spiritual ancestor of American opera. The Ballad Opera borrowed the notion of using popular tunes. It introduced the use of non-heroic characters into opera, and, in the same period, gave the world "incidental music," music composed for atmosphere to accompany already existing plays; and "entr'acte music," composed for the intermissions between acts and scenes. All of these elements are incorporated into American opera.

The combined Venetian and Roman schools influenced the French composers, and the result was the French *Opera-Comique*. The Venetian school gave the French the concept of putting words to the popular tunes of the day called *vaudevilles*.

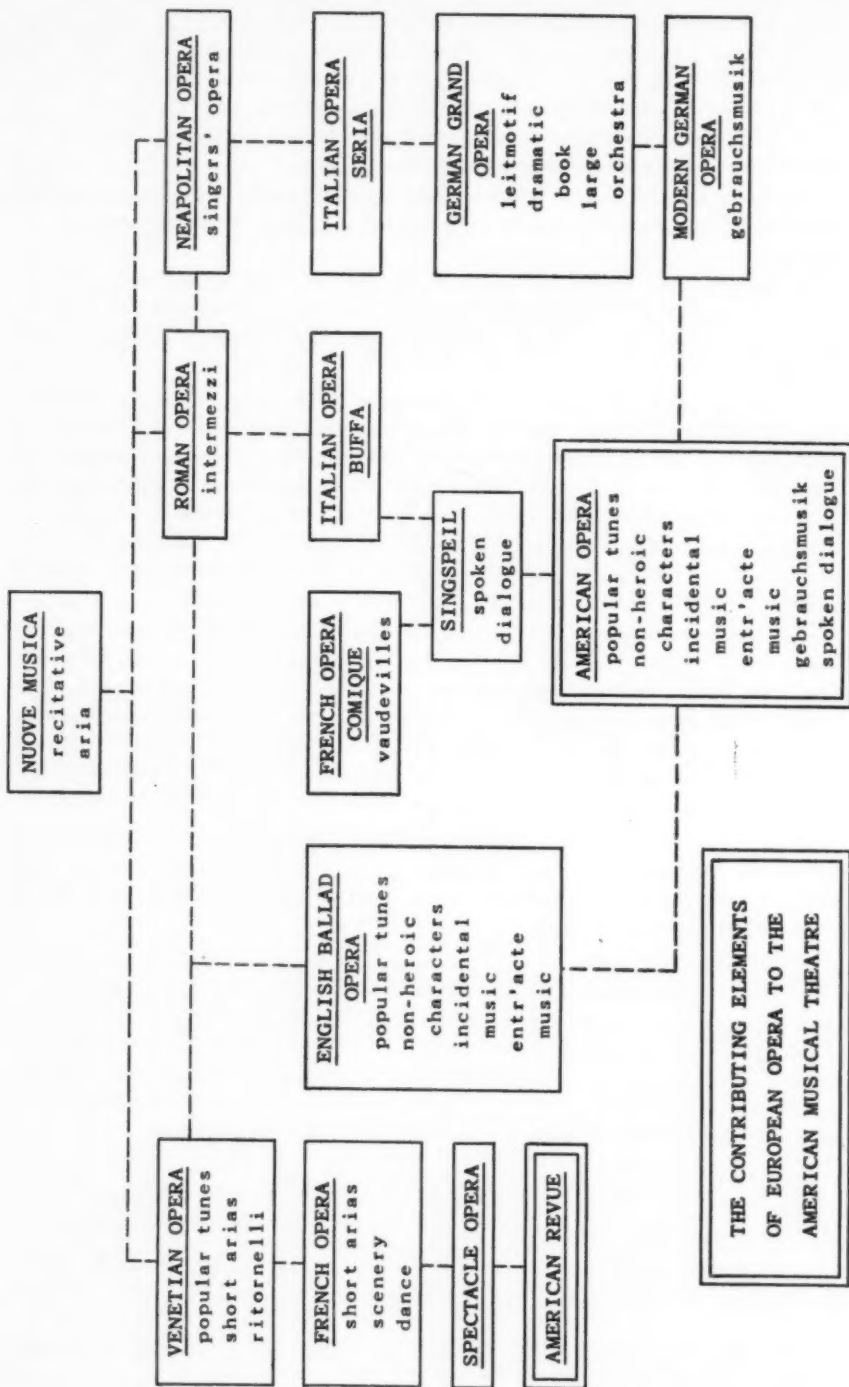
The Roman school was the principal influence on the Italian *Opera Buffa*, another form of comic opera; and the French and Italian comic operas directly

<sup>1</sup> Sister Mary Eileen Coyne, S.S.J., *op. cit.*, page 6.

<sup>2</sup> I acknowledge the valuable assistance of Sister Mary Matilde, B.V.M., Chairman of the Music Department of Clarke College, in preparing this chart (next page).

<sup>3</sup> Hugh Milton Miller, *An Outline Of The History of Music* (New York: Barnes and Noble, revised edition, 1951), page 74-80.





influenced the German school of light opera, the *Singspiel* which gave American opera the element of actual spoken dialogue incorporated into a predominantly musical work. The distinction between the spoken passages of *The Medium* and *Guys And Dolls*, for example, is the distinction between the German *singspiel* and the Italian *recitative*.

Meanwhile, the Neapolitan "singers' opera" became the basis for the popular "European" form of opera. From it came the Italian *Opera Seria* and the German grand opera. Wagner later was to introduce the *leitmotif* or theme music, since adopted by Hollywood as part of "incidental music," an accent on a dramatic book, and use of a much larger orchestra. Later, the modern German composers, principally Hindemith, rebelled against this musical opulence and created *gebrauchsmusik*, music composed for performance by musical amateurs. This became a fundamental tenet of American opera: our music is generally written for actors who attempt to sing, rather than for singers who sometimes act.<sup>1</sup>

So much for the characteristics we have borrowed from our European cousins: popular airs, non-heroic characters, broad use of incidental and entr'acte music, *gebrauchsmusik* for the musical amateur, and *singspiel* because we have a tendency not to go for the actual "singing" of banal, trite, or prosaic phrases like "Shut the door!" or "Hello, Charlie! How are you?"

What, then, is distinctly American about our operas?

First, the degree of integration of all our arts—and the best of all our arts—into musical drama.

In explaining why American artists produced *My Fair Lady* instead of *Englishmen*, Kenneth Tynan observed:

"The answer is quite simple. London's theatre is socially different from New York's. New York regards the musical not as a separate kind of drama, but as an amalgam of all existing kinds... In London the musical is still a thing apart, and something to be sniffed at. It is impossible to imagine Benjamin Britten collaborating with Terence Rattigan on a popular show: they would both think it beneath them."<sup>2</sup>

It is fitting, therefore, that in our democracy, no artist considered musical theatre "beneath them." Poet-playwrights like Maxwell Anderson have worked in the musical theatre. Serious composers like Gershwin, Blitzstein, and Villa-Lobos have rubbed elbows with "pop" writers like Berlin, Porter, Loesser, and Rodgers. Novelists Capote and O'Hara have penned musical-comedy books. Opera singers Pinza and Traubel, ballerinas like Zorina, choreographers like Balanchine have all contributed to the form.

The second American element in our form of opera is our distinctive use and style of dance. When dancing was first incorporated into opera in the French forms, they were the customary dances of the day: the gavotte, chaconnes, bourees, and minuets.<sup>3</sup> With the advent of classical ballet into musical theatre as in *The Black Crook*, the custom of "stopping" the dramatic action to permit the dancers to exercise themselves was introduced. But with the introduction of dancing founded on folk dances in *Rose-Marie*, and the use of pantomime and free forms of dance to

<sup>1</sup> "Most singers are not good actors... A singer has one thing—and only one thing—on his mind: his voice." Ezio Pinza, "Singer As An Actor," *Theatre Arts Magazine* (January, 1954), page 72.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Tynan, *op. cit.*, page 88.

<sup>3</sup> Hugh Milton Miller, *op. cit.*, page 76.

delineate a character and advance the plot in *Oklahoma!*, the pattern of dance in American opera was formalized.

Dancing in American opera is (1) based on the locale and folk dances of the country represented, (2) more free in form and incorporates a great deal of pantomimic activity and "synchronized movement," and (3) is so well integrated that it advances the plot and/or contributes directly to character development.

This last distinction has reached a point now where entire musical plays are under the complete direction of a choreographer such as Michael Kidd, Jerome Robbins, and George Balanchine.

A third, strictly American element, is our new use of the chorus; and, particularly, the rise and fall of that typical American invention—partly responsible for the cold reception afforded American opera in educational circles—the American chorus girl.

To see how these three distinctly American elements developed from the evolution of the American opera on Broadway, let us trace the history of this form from the earliest amalgam of dance, integrated arts, and the chorus girl.

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(Parts III and IV of Mr. Herman's article will appear in the May issue)



The statue of the "Valiant Woman" is made from Batesville marble brought from Batesville, Arkansas to Kansas City, Missouri where Miss Joan Jehlen, sculptress, created the figure.

The expansion program, long dreamed of at Marymount College, which began March 9, 1954, when the Most Reverend Frank A. Thill broke ground for the two new buildings, reached its culmination February 25, 1957.

Marian Hall, women's residence hall, was completed and formally opened in September 1955. In January of 1955 the excavations for the fine arts building began and is complete today after a period of a little over two years. The fine arts building provides for the art, music and speech departments, a little theatre, seating 156, and the auditorium with seating capacity of 1,036.

#### TURN LEFT — IT'S MUSIC

Five faculty members have each a modernily-lighted and furnished studio with new piano. There are 24 practice rooms and two classrooms.

The music library houses over 600 volumes of records. Reference books, biographies of great musicians and other source materials provide students with ample musical information. It's walls are wormy cypress and birch. Complete library equipment, files, workroom, etc., add to the utility of the room.

All equipment, shelving, etc., were supplied by the Remington Rand Company. Dunbar furniture is used in the library and in the lobby. The office for the use of the department is equipped with telephone and modern phone by which messages can be delivered throughout the building.

The rehearsal room has three tiers of circular risers for 84 chairs. The paneled wall is built with large double doors which may open or close for acoustical effects. Just off the rehearsal room is the recording room where programs may be tape recorded. All recording equipment were furnished by R.C.A.

There are 30 pianos and an electric organ in use in the department. Twelve new pianos were purchased from the Jenkins Music Company at a cost of \$14,137. The two 7-foot Steinways are to be used in the auditorium.





Showing Exterior of drama wing from front. Music to left—art center back.

**FINE ARTS BLDG.  
MARYMOUNT COLLEGE  
SALINA, KANSAS**

Lobby of Little Theatre showing first row in large theatre steps to corridor and lounges.



Lobby of Big Theatre: Steps left to balcony and ballroom below theatre. Art corridor at a distance.





#### **TOP RIGHT**

Large Theatre shooting off left in balcony.

#### **LOWER RIGHT**

Light and sound consoles in balcony booth (large theatre).

#### **TOP LEFT**

Director's Office opening into little theatre lobby.

#### **CENTER LEFT**

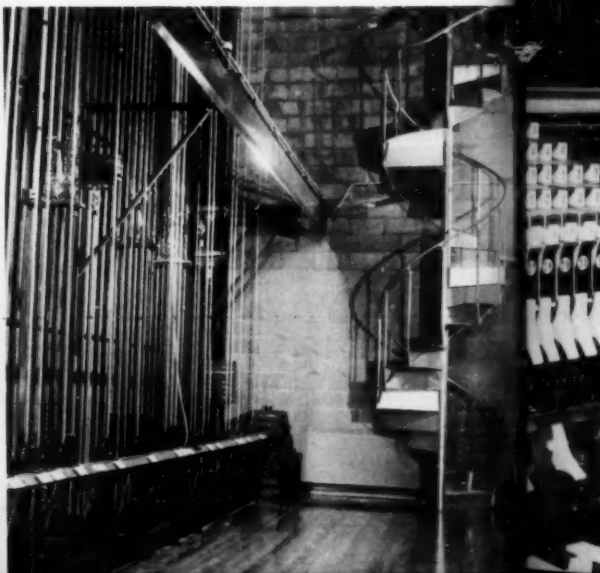
Large Dressing Room for women.

#### **LOWER LEFT**

Scene shop.

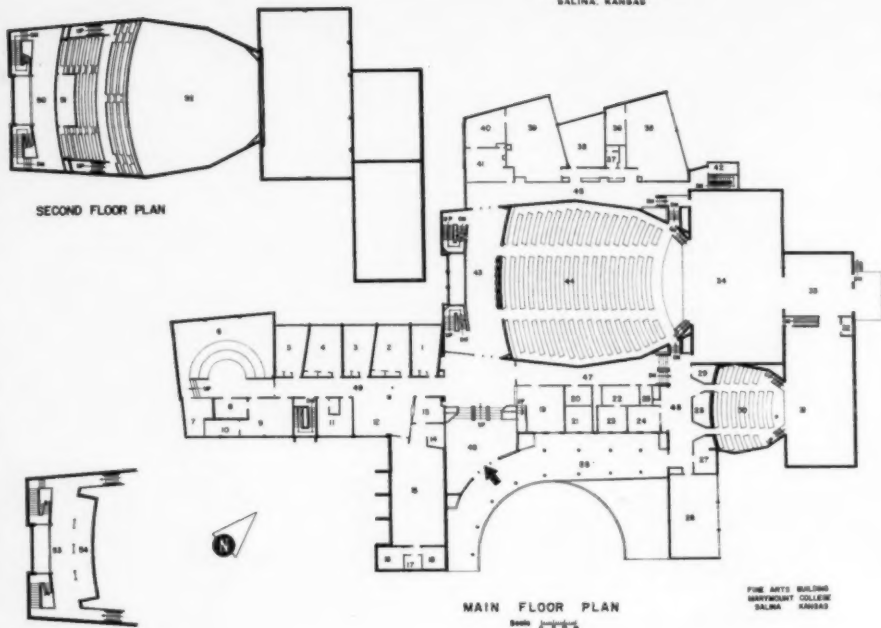
#### **LOWER CENTER**

Stage (big) right showing all lines except act curtain and asbestos. 61 steps to upper loading gallery.



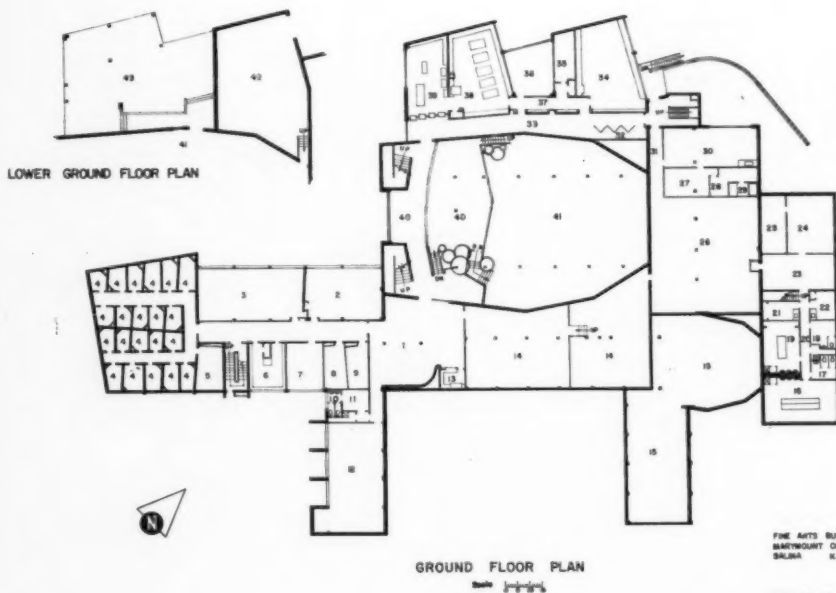


MARYMOUNT COLLEGE  
SALINA, KANSAS



KEY TO FLOOR PLAN

- 1 STUDIO
- 2 STUDIO
- 3 STUDIO
- 4 STUDIO
- 5 STUDIO
- 6 REHEARSAL ROOM
- 7 INSTRUMENT STORAGE
- 8 CONTROL ROOM
- 9 INSTRUMENT STORAGE
- 10 WORK ROOM
- 11 CLASS ROOM
- 12 RECEPTION
- 13 OFFICE
- 14 CHANGING AREA
- 15 LIBRARY
- 16 RECORD PLAYER
- 17 STORAGE
- 18 CHECK ROOM
- 19 MEN'S LOUNGE
- 20 MEN'S TOILET
- 21 WOMEN'S LOUNGE
- 22 WOMEN'S TOILET
- 23 OFFICE
- 24 DRESSING ROOM
- 25 CONTROL ROOM
- 26 PROJECTION ROOM
- 27 STORAGE
- 28 THEATER
- 29 STAGE
- 30 DRESSING ROOM
- 31 WORK SHOP
- 32 STAGE
- 33 ART CLASS ROOM
- 34 STORAGE
- 35 TOILET
- 36 BALCONY
- 37 ART CLASS ROOM
- 38 STORAGE
- 39 OFFICE
- 40 HONORARIUM
- 41 ORCHESTRA LOBBY
- 42 AUDITORIUM
- 43 CORRIDOR
- 44 THEATER LOBBY
- 45 CORRIDOR
- 46 MAIN ENTRY
- 47 CORRIDOR
- 48 CORRIDOR
- 49 UPPER BALCONY LOBBY
- 50 CONTROL ROOM
- 51 UPPER AUDITORIUM
- 52 BALCONY LOBBY
- 53 DISPLAY AREA
- 54 LOBBY



KEY TO FLOOR PLAN

- 1 RECEPTION
- 2 MUSIC CLASS ROOM
- 3 MUSIC CLASS ROOM
- 4 PRACTICE ROOM
- 5 PRACTICE ROOM
- 6 CLARK ROOM
- 7 EQUIPMENT ROOM
- 8 PRACTICE ROOM
- 9 PRACTICE ROOM
- 10 WOMEN'S TOILET
- 11 LOBBY
- 12 DANCE STUDIO
- 13 OTTOMANETTE
- 14 MECHANICAL EQUIP. & DYN
- 15 UNOCCUPIED AREAS
- 16 WOMEN'S DRESSING ROOM
- 17 WOMEN'S TOILET
- 18 MEN'S TOILET
- 19 MEN'S DRESSING ROOM
- 20 CORRIDOR
- 21 WOMEN'S DRESSING ROOM
- 22 MEN'S DRESSING ROOM
- 23 GREEN ROOM
- 24 COSTUME SEWING ROOM
- 25 COSTUME STORAGE
- 26 MECHANICAL EQUIP. & DYN
- 27 PHOTO STUDIO
- 28 DARK ROOM
- 29 DARK ROOM
- 30 REPRODUCTION ROOM
- 31 CORRIDOR
- 32 DISPLAY AREA
- 33 CORRIDOR
- 34 HEAVY CLASS ROOM
- 35 STORAGE
- 36 BALCONY
- 37 CORRIDOR
- 38 CRAFT ROOM
- 39 CRAFT ROOM
- 40 STUDENT LOUNGE
- 41 BALL ROOM
- 42 EQUIPMENT STORAGE
- 43 TERRACE

FINE ARTS BUILDING  
MARYMOUNT COLLEGE  
SALINA, KANSAS

CHARLES W. B. JOHNSON & DAUER  
ARCHITECTS  
SALINA, KANSAS

Majors in piano, voice and music education are offered in the department.

Opportunities for choral, ensemble groups, instrument ensembles, the band and the string orchestra are part of the general activities of the music department. Civic programs, radio broadcasts, TV programs, etc., are also on the agenda.

#### ART DEPARTMENT—WEST WING

There are three instructors in the art department which consists of four classrooms, an office, sketching balcony on each floor, with weaving and craft rooms. Exhibition boards and niches furnish ample opportunity for display. An exhibition gallery back of the auditorium with light from the huge south window, 43 feet high, makes a perfect setting for art displays. Classrooms on the upper floor are equipped with sketching seats, adjustable drawing tables, display boards, cabinets and drawers for storage purposes.

The craft rooms have four pounding tables covered with laminated wood; one of which has four vises, two wood and two machinist type. There are two soldering areas with transite tops; a kiln for firing ceramics and an enamel kiln; stainless steel containers for wet clay, clay wedging board, spray booth with exhaust for glazing ceramics and bins for storing dry clay.

One cabinet has leather racks. There are silver tray and sawing areas for silver smithing.

Display boards under an area of spot lights tend to bring out the color and artistic beauty of the students' work.

A large weaving room has eight and four-harness looms and 13 smaller looms with plenty of drawers and cabinets for storage. The well-lighted office has a beautiful display of madonnas.

#### DRAMA AND SPEECH DEPARTMENT

Marymount's drama students have a modern classroom with elevated platform and spotlights for exhibit—for class speeches and for "try-outs."

Just off the classroom is the "Little Theatre" designed for theatre and music practice in a college fine arts set-up. It has a system of lines for operating the stage lights and drapery. The lighting is controlled by a small Davis Dimmer designed by the Davis Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, which has twelve unit dimmers. The "Little Theatre" seats 156 spectators.

The lay-out of the equipment for the auditorium and Little Theatre was done with the consultive services of Miss Jean Rosenthal, President of Theatre Production Services in New York City. Miss Rosenthal is known internationally for her exceptional ability in lighting and has given to our stage lighting the benefits of her 20 years of experience.

Arrangement of and equipment in the auditorium which seats 1,036 people were made to suit the varied activities ranging from orchestra concerts to public speaking, general meetings and dramatic and musical productions.

Dimensions of the stage: Proscenium width 38 feet; offstage left 18 feet; offstage right 21 feet; stage depth 40 feet; height of stage—stage floor to bottom of grid 50 feet.

The curtains and lights on the stage are raised and lowered by a counterweight system installed by J. R. Clancy Company of Syracuse, N. Y. The system consists of 33 regular lines and two separate ones for operating the house curtain and the fire curtain.

The front curtain is a flame coral behind which is a gold fiber glass curtain and the entire stage drapery is of dark blue velour.

There are four pipes of border lights, three of spots and 10 spotlights or cove in the ceiling of the auditorium itself.

The switchboard for the auditorium was constructed by the Metropolitan Stage-board Company of Long Island, N. Y. It consists of three units: a reactor board, a patch panel (stage left), and a remote console in the balcony booth.

The flexibility of the board makes possible almost unlimited combinations for the many-desired effects for musical and dramatic productions on the stage. The system includes 36 individual dimmers and four non-dim units.

### INTERESTING FACTS

Marymount College was built during the regime of Mother Antoinette, superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia. The corner stone was laid in 1919 and the college opened its doors to Salina and the vicinity in September 1922. The first class of seven was graduated in 1926.

Steady and consistent growth in enrollment, the acquisition of bigger and better accreditations through the years has made Marymount College for women one of the most highly accredited colleges in the area.



Marymount College is accredited by:

- The North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools
- The University of Kansas
- The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education
- The National Nursing Service (Temporary)

It is affiliated with the Catholic University of America and the Institutum Divi Thomae and has full recognition from the Kansas State Board of Education for puposes of certification of teachers, and the Kansas State Board of Nurses Examiners. It holds membership in:

- The National Commission on Accrediting
- The National Catholic Educational Association
- The Association of American Colleges
- The American Council on Education
- The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
- The American Library Association
- The National Association of Schools of Music (Institutional Member)
- The National Association of Business Teacher-Training Institutions

In 1950 the division of nursing was formally added to the college curriculum which now offers major courses in art, music, speech, mathematics, chemistry, biological science, economics and physical education, theology, philosophy, education, psychology and nursing.

There are 485 students enrolled this semester from 17 states, Hawaii, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Central America, South America and China.

There are 42 faculty members; 12 hold doctors' degrees.

The science department recently received a \$2600.00 grant from the National Science Foundation for special research.

Library facilities are being expanded into the recently-vacated music wing to accommodate 50,000 books. There are some 30,000 volumes in the library under the direction of a full-time degreed librarian.

The Immaculate Conception chapel in the administration building was redecorated in 1954. Its stained glass windows made by the Zeiter Company in Munich, Germany were imported when the building was constructed.

\* \* \* \* \*

John Shaver was the architect for both buildings and for the remodeling of the administration building.

Marian Hall, and upper classmen's residence hall, was opened in September 1955, and at that time Mr. Shaver was given the outstanding building award by the regional A.I.A.

Mel Jarvis Construction Company is likewise in charge of the entire construction project.

The buildings were erected at a cost of slightly over two million dollars.

Salina contributed some \$100,000 at the time of the building drive in 1948.

Much of the equipment, supplies, brick, steel, etc., were purchased through and from Salina firms: General Air Conditioning & Electrical Company; Salina Planing Mill; Salina Concrete Products, Inc.; Globe Sheet Metal Works, Leidigh & Havens Lumber Company; J. F. Ritter Tile Shop; Lee Hardware Company; Salina Coffee House; Crawford and Son; Pittsburg Plate Glass Company; Putman Sand & Building Company, Inc.; Rogers Paint Store; Salina Manufacturing Company; Dwight Putman Interiors; Kansas Landscape & Nursery Company and numerous other firms in Salina benefited from the building project.

\* \* \* \* \*

So ends the expansion program . . . from the genius of the mind of man came the design . . . the power and strength of man constructed it to the honor of God, the good of the community, and for the Christian education of the youth of the city of Salina, the State of Kansas and for the youth of the world who enter the portals of Marymount College.

# MR. ELIOT'S HOTEL UNIVERSE

By DONALD HUGH DICKINSON

The professional playwright who wishes to create religious drama in our day faces special problems of art and faith that never bothered the writers of mystery and miracle plays in the Middle Ages. This is because he cannot assume that his audience believes certain fundamental doctrines of faith or morals which he himself believes. If he could take for granted such a community of belief as medieval play-makers shared with their audiences, he would be free to concentrate on purely aesthetic matters. Instead, he must gamble on his power to cast a spell that will hold the interest and move the emotions of spectators, despite their many faiths—or lack of faith. In creating the illusion of life that is drama, the playwright has always had to induce in his audiences a "willing suspension of disbelief"; but now the problem is twofold: it involves religious, as well as imaginative, disbelief.

In order to enjoy what is to come, an audience will usually make the imaginative leap with ease, if its attention is caught by an incident and characters of sufficient dramatic interest. Its religious beliefs, or disbeliefs, are far less tractable. If it yields at all, it does so only with difficulty and reluctance. So, as an artist, the playwright must frankly consider the question, "How much may the particular beliefs I have embodied in my play prevent the spectator from accepting and enjoying it?" If he writes for the illusionistic theatre, which is almost the only kind we have today, he will put the question this way: "How can I absorb the doctrinal or didactic elements into the total illusion I am trying to create?" For he knows that good intentions will not save him: regardless of his religious beliefs, he must succeed as a dramatist, or else he simply fails.

Now, there is no inherent reason why a work of dramatic art may not be didactic, either in method or in purpose. But the playwright knows that the intellectual climate of our day is distinctly unfavorable to didacticism in art. This is partly a reaction from thesis and propaganda plays which sacrifice truth in their depiction of life. It is partly a matter of fashionable attitudes; and, until lately at least, orthodoxy has been unfashionable. And it is partly a real aversion, springing from distrust or fear or even a hatred of dogma, especially religious dogma, that is characteristic of the temper of our times.

Nonetheless, we need to remember that didacticism of any kind must, as long as it uses drama as its form, submit to—and be judged by—aesthetic standards of dramatic art. For doctrine, no matter how impeccable, is not well served by a faulty play; and a poor play, however orthodox, cannot be saved by its doctrinal message. This is a distinction which, if it were freely admitted, would eliminate much critical confusion and quarreling, and might even discourage the production of plays which have nothing to recommend them but their well-intentioned piety. In art, good intentions are not enough: only good art is.

These reflections were prompted when I compared two plays of obvious religious intent—T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* and Philip Barry's *Hotel Universe*—and

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discovered, to my surprise, many similarities between them. As I hope to show, these similarities are not accidental. Barry wrote his play twenty years before Eliot's appeared; but I haven't the least idea whether or not Eliot ever saw or read it; and, besides, I'm not concerned to prove influences or borrowings. My real point is simply that the two playwrights, having didactic aims and using the style of realism, were bound to become involved with similar problems of technique. What these problems are, how they relate to modern religious drama, and how each attempted to solve them, for the real focus of my inquiry.

## I

One night during a rehearsal of *Hotel Universe*, we were working on a passage in which the supposedly mad physicist, Stephen Field, speaks of a strange experience he had:

There are no words for it. It is a sense, a knowing. It may come upon you in a field one day, or as you turn a corner, or one fine morning, as you stoop to lace your shoe.

Off the top of my mind, I said: "You know, it sounds very much like Eliot," yet I was surprised when one of the actors agreed with me. After rehearsal, I sat up late comparing the two plays, convinced that they were somehow related. Somewhere, there was a resemblance between the two plays that had struck a chord of memory, beyond the fact that Stephen Field functions as catalyst in Barry's play, much as Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly does in *The Cocktail Party*. One might almost say they "fitted together." But how?

I could find ideas that were similar. For example, Stephen's lines, when he sends the unhappy worldlings on their Freudian journey into the past:

Listen: there is a turning. All things are turned to a roundness. Wherever there is an end, from it springs the beginning.

Edward Chamberlayne's speech at the close of *The Cocktail Party* seemed to me an echo of this:

... Every moment is a fresh beginning; ... Life is only keeping on;

And somehow, the two ideas seem to fit together

Or, take Stephen's account of what he learned when, as he puts it, he "walked back in time":

I have found out a simple thing: that in existence there are three estates. There is this life of chairs and tables, of getting up and sitting down. There is the life one lives in one's imaginings, in which one wishes, dreams, remembers. There is the life past death, which in itself contains the others. The three estates are one. We dwell now in this one, now in that—but in whichever we may be, breezes from the others still blow upon us.

Was this not like Sir Henry's quoting these lines (from Shelley) at the end of Eliot's play:

For know there are two worlds of life and death:  
One that which thou beholdest; but the other  
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit  
The shadows of all forms that think and live  
Till death unite them and they part no more.

But these might be no more than surface likenesses, aside from the fact that both men write from strong religious convictions and both take an affirmative view of the meaning of life. (For all its bleakness, I believe I may call Eliot's view affirmative. But he is clearly far less confident than is Barry, that human relationships can be satisfying and happy. To him, marriage, for example, seems a bad bargain (though, of course, one must make the best of it); and his real interest in his plays, as Eric Bentley has noted, seems to be centered on the characters who try to break away altogether from human relationships, as a precondition of sanctity. One could infer from Barry, on the other hand, a more Incarnational view, and that human relationships may be the very means of achieving salvation.)

No, I should have to find other parallels before the two plays "fitted together." Well, there was the curious fact that both dramatize scenes of intuition, with more or less supernatural implications. In *The Cocktail Party*, just as Alex is about to tell Edward and Lavinia of Celia Coplestone's cruel death, Julia exclaims:

Edward! / Somebody must have walked over my grave: I'm feeling so  
chilly. Give me some gin. Not a cocktail. I'm freezing—in July!

In *Hotel Universe*, we have this exchange, which occurs on an oppressively hot summer night and in a context of impending disaster, for Pat Farley, one of the group, has secretly decided to take his own life:

ALICE. Oh, good Lord—

HOPE. What's the matter?

ALICE. Suddenly I had the most abominable chill.

LILY. On a night like this?

And in the same play, Stephen's daughter, Ann, shares his intuitive power, though to a lesser extent. When Stephen touches the lives of each of the characters who go backward in time, his power is clearly more than intuitive: it is miraculous. So it reminds us of Sir Henry's vision upon first meeting Celia Coplestone at the cocktail party:

—When I first met Miss Coplestone, in this room, I saw the image,  
standing behind her chair,  
Of a Celia Coplestone whose face showed the astonishment  
Of the first five minutes after a violent death.  
If this strains your credulity, Mrs. Chamberlayne,  
I ask you only to entertain the suggestion  
That a sudden intuition, in certain minds,  
May tend to express itself at once in a picture.  
That happens to me, sometimes. So it was obvious  
That here was a woman under sentence of death.  
That was her destiny.

I found other similarities, and some interesting differences. Both plays open with a party, an apparently festive mood that soon turns into something quite different. In Eliot's play, drinking is merely social, part of the picture of the humdrum life of the worldly. In Barry's play, drinking is symptomatic: it is a means of escape, the thing one is driven to do, to fill the spiritual vacuum. And, of course, there is the psychiatry. Eliot gives us the modish trappings of the profession, though without the catch-phrases; but he carefully evades the question as to whether Sir Henry is a real psychiatrist, with a license to practice. Superficially, he seems bent on the care of minds; actually, he deals with the cure of souls. In an interview with Henry Hewes, in *The Saturday Review*, however, Eliot specifically referred to Sir Henry as a psychiatrist; and added: "To tell you the truth I think the psychiatry had a lot to do with the success of 'The Cocktail Party.' It made it very fashionable."

To me, Barry's use of psychoanalysis in *Hotel Universe* is both technically more ingenious and artistically more satisfying. He dispenses not only with the catch-phrases but also with the trappings; though his Stephen, like Sir Henry, is concerned with the cure of souls. The real difference lies, however, in this: *Hotel Universe* uses, as the bases of its central action and of its technical construction, the processes of psychoanalytic therapy—dreams, the free association of ideas, and the reliving of traumatic experiences in order to expose the characters' conscious minds and their subconscious conflicts. I believe it was the first American play to do this. Its originality of craftsmanship constituted the play's novelty in 1930; and also, I suspect, its difficulty for audiences unused either to psychoanalysis or to its basic assumptions. Since then, of course, Freudian psychology—or what passes for it in the popular mind—has become a cliché, not only of the stage, but also of films and television drama; and its terms—used or misused—have long since entered common speech.

But it is important to note that both plays, unlike much of modern Freudian drama, endow their principal characters, whatever their subconscious torments, with free wills to make moral choices, and both plays force them to make those choices in full consciousness. Thus, they escape the Freudian pitfall which tends to rob characters of their dignity and dramatic importance as free individuals, and dramatic conflict of its moral significance.

Also, both plays have their "guardians"—*The Cocktail Party*, notoriously so; *Hotel Universe*, unobtrusively so. Eliot told Henry Hewes: "In 'The Cocktail Party,' only four of the seven characters are characters in the true sense. The psychiatrist and his two assistants are outside the action of the play. They interfere, but there is no character development in these three, they just perform a job. I think that the audiences may have been mystified by this." Yes, indeed; and somewhat annoyed, too. If you examine the play, you will find that what the assistants do in it—apart from collecting information, keeping a weather eye on their charges, bringing them round at the right time, and making fast exits by the service staircase, is to interrupt the dramatic action. They do not complicate it—which would add to the suspense; they merely delay the action; and so, as Eliot says, they "interfere." Yet they also provide most of the comedy in the play.

In *Hotel Universe*, Stephen Field is as much a guardian—and guide—as is Sir Henry; and Ann Field, sharing much, though not all, of her father's vision, is a guardian, too. But the involvement of each, the extent to which each of them is



committed to the action, and therefore *within* it, is far greater. To begin with, they are father and daughter; and this human relationship motivates Stephen, on a human level, to help his child rescue the man she loves from the brink of suicide. And it is Ann's deep, human love for Pat Farley, and her pity for her friends, as well as her own need to capture the happiness she had once known with Pat, that causes her to call on her father for help, and thus to precipitate the central action of the play.

To make it even more certain that Stephen shall not stand outside the action of the play, Barry causes him to die of a stroke, apparently brought on by the extraordinary experiences he undergoes in helping the others, as they journey into the past to relive the critical moments of their lives. Stephen does not foresee that such an effort will cost him his life; and so, as I read the play, there is no dramatic choice for him to make at the outset. But, when he finally realizes that his next moment may be his last, he fights off death, refusing to succumb until he has secured his daughter's happiness. Compare this scene of an old man, selflessly striving for another's happiness, with those few moments of real humanity which Eliot permits us to glimpse in Sir Henry—moments of self-doubt and inadequacy which he suffers after reconciling Edward and Lavinia and sending Celia on the road to martyrdom. Nor do we learn until much later of the vision of Celia which had been vouchsafed him, so that the dramatic pressure of the climax of Act II is lower than it might have been.

Judging the roles of Sir Henry and Stephen as acting opportunities, we find that the former role lacks that quality of the idiosyncratic which makes it recognizably human, except for the antic guise which Eliot permits Sir Henry to assume briefly as the Unidentified Stranger in Act I. Barry, on the other hand, while only lightly sketching in the character of the mystic scientist, Stephen Field, uses to good effect the sleight-of-hand which the stage so effectively exploits, thus giving Stephen the appearance of being a much more rounded character than, strictly speaking, he is. That is to say, he becomes for the moment a different person in each of the four flashback episodes: to Tom Ames, he is an old priest; to Norman Rose, a Jewish clothing merchant; to Lily Malone, he is her drunken actor-father whose cruelty caused her to hate him; and, to Pat Farley, he is the uncle and guardian of the girl he had dishonored and jilted.

But I was looking for similarities, not differences, wasn't I? So I shall point out only three more similarities, hoping that when I have done that, I shall have convinced you that the plays are enough alike to warrant drawing some conclusions from a comparison of the important elements to be found in both.

Each play contains a confession scene which, under the guidance of the guardian, ends in faith—the discovery of faith for Celia, the recovery of faith for Tom Ames—or, at least, the hope of its recovery. For both Celia and Tom, religious faith is the mainspring of character and the central meaning of life. Celia achieves faith, and marches to success; that is, she devotes her life to heroic good works and suffers martyrdom. Tom, on the other hand, will always be searching for faith; since, for people like him, all life is in the wish for certitude, and the hope of it, rather than in certitude itself. Barry's scene is set in the specific context of a Roman Catholic confessional; Eliot's, in the quasi-psychiatric consulting-room, and its religious references are studiously elliptical and vague.

Next, let's consider the realistic settings of the plays, and the weight of symbolism they are designed to support—Eliot's drawing-room and consulting-room, and Barry's lovely terrace overlooking the Mediterranean. Eliot begins and ends his play in the setting of a cocktail party—surely one of the most typical phenomena of present-day social life. This gives us not only a real-looking room, but also a symbol instantly recognizable and familiar to modern audiences. Eliot intends, as I see it, that the cocktail party shall symbolize life—a certain kind of life, at any rate—and the response of the characters to the human associations it provides and the duties which that state in life involves. It is also the surface of life, part of the role each character sustains in public, in contrast to the personal and private life that emerges when the last cocktail has been drunk and the guests have gone. The setting of Act II, Sir Henry's consulting-room, serves as a symbolically appropriate background for the three principals—Edward, Lavinia, and Celia—when they go inward, so to speak, and struggle with their deeper natures. Both settings, while helping to symbolize the kinds of action presented, stay entirely within the realistic mode: drinks, cigarettes, telephones, lifts, servants, and so on—what Stephen, in fact, would call the whole life of tables and chairs, of getting up and sitting down—with no scenic elements distorted or exaggerated.

We find the same fidelity to the demands of realism, as well as an underlying symbolic purpose, in the single setting of *Hotel Universe*. This seaside terrace is unusual, it is true, but entirely credible; and it is quite evident from the published play that Barry set great store by it, and saw to it that the designer carried out his conception to the letter. The low-walled terrace, situated high on the hillside, is charmingly airy in the sunset light; but, in the moonlight, it becomes eerie, with a huge expanse of sky above it, the sea below, and no line to mark the horizon. From time to time it is strikingly illuminated by a beam from the light-house on the Ile de Port Cros. We have only to note that the beam of light is pointedly referred to as being like the finger of God; that, in the discussion of faith and despair that takes place, one of the characters says: "It all resolves itself into the fundamental problem of the location of Man in the Universe"; and, finally, that these eerie changes are timed to coincide with the characters' several journeys into the past, to realize how carefully Barry contrived to point up the location: Man in the Universe, under the finger of God.

Last of all, let us consider this: events in both plays have symbolic, as well as literal, meaning. In *The Cocktail Party*, when his wife Lavinia leaves him and he is forced to see himself for the first time as he is, Edward Chamberlayne is in hell—a hell of private torment, and it is unbearable. Yet his season in hell is the beginning of his new and worthier life, and the death of his old life. We may imagine something of the same for Lavinia, though Eliot gives us less opportunity to see her torment dramatized. As for Celia, when her lover broke with her, she found life unreal, hellish, a death-in-life; and, under Sir Henry's guidance, she dies to an old love and an old life that were equally purposeless. Is this not similar to the fact that, in *Hotel Universe*, Pat, Lily, Tom and Norman are all in private hells, that all undergo a kind of symbolic death and resurrection as a result of their journeys into the past? Under Stephen's guidance, each relives the crucial experience that had set him or her on the road to despair or suicide; and, returning from the past as from a kind of hell, each regains a faith in life and a renewed purpose.

Well, I had got that far in my late-night sessions of comparing the two plays, when I remembered that, in rehearsal, I had told the actors that the central action of *Hotel Universe*, expressed infinitively in the Stanislavsky manner, was: "To come to terms with life, by reliving the past." And here, in *The Cocktail Party*, was Sir Henry, expressing precisely what the characters in both plays had to do:

You will have to live with these memories and make them into something new. Only by acceptance of the past will you alter its meaning.

Here (at last!) on the level of the central action, I found what I believe to be the true correspondence of the two plays; and it is at this level that I wish to compare them. Let me add that, in reaching the level of the central action, we have got beyond not only surface resemblances and differences, but also beyond considerations of language. For our purpose, therefore, it is not important that Eliot's play is in verse; and Barry's, in prose; especially since the convention of verse dialogue which Eliot adopted puts little or no strain upon the illusion of the life-like. Except for certain strong rhythms it sets up, the speech of the characters is to all intents the recognizable speech of culture people—highly selective speech, of course, as we should expect for stage purposes; but, then, so is prose dialogue. And Eliot carefully graded the intensity of the verse, so that audiences would never say to themselves: "Ah! now we're hearing poetry!" That being the case, it is not so reckless as it may seem, to disregard the difference of literary form in which the dialogue of the two plays is cast.

Yet I have already stressed the fact that both plays are written in the realistic mode; and I have done so, because I think the use of this theatrical style has a very important bearing upon the type of play both dramatists wished to write, and qualified their success. Realism tries to make us feel that we are looking in upon real life as lived by real people in real places. Because its object is to achieve lifelikeness, verisimilitude, its method is to reproduce on the stage the appearances of real life. Thus, it belongs to the illusionistic theatre, and requires for its success as a style, real-looking settings, characters who are recognizable types despite individual differences, who speak as people of their time and class would speak, and who take part in plots that stress credibility of incident and consistency of character.

Quite obviously, realism is not reality—it is merely one of many styles that a playwright might use; and each style is no more than a particular angle from which he views reality itself, the means by which he hopes to express truth in his work. Any style is, admittedly, simply a convention—realism included. But there can be no question but that, in our day, realism is the style which most readily induces in an audience the willingness to believe the illusion that is created upon the stage. I do not say it is the only style that induces belief, I say it is the style which does so most easily. But its use imposes limitations—for one thing, it conditions an audience to expect the characteristics of the style noted above; and a playwright finds it correspondingly difficult to surmount them, when his aim is actually to go beyond realism.

For both playwrights, however, the use of the realistic mode seems to me to have been something more than mere preference. It is as if choosing any other style would have been to take the easy way out—almost to evade the real challenge that lay in their subject matter and theme. All Barry's religious plays, with the exception of the historical drama, *John*, are contemporary in setting, as well as illusionistic in method. As for Eliot, he based *Murder in the Cathedral* formally on Greek models and liturgical ritual; but as early as 1924, as Arnold Bennett recorded in his *Journal*, "He wanted to write a drama of modern life (furnished-flat sort of people) in a rhythmic prose, perhaps with certain things accentuated by drumbeats." Perhaps what Eliot then had in mind was the fragmentary *Sweeney Agonistes*; but he persisted in dramatizing modern life in *The Family Reunion*, *The Cocktail Party*, and *The Confidential Clerk*. The reason is plain, from Eliot's own words:

I only want to write plays of contemporary life. For me, at least, a play set in the past, or in some fictitious place or time, would be an evasion of the immediate task.

The task, as he sees it, was to prepare for an age of verse drama. Re-establishment of the convention of verse drama, in a modern idiom, is for him the central problem of our theatre. Here, however, he had also the problem of inducing the audience to accept the multiple levels of reality the play deals with, and to find the technical means to convey them. The truth of this lies, I think, in the fact that Barry, writing in prose, was nonetheless forced to deal with the same problem.

This, then, is the situation: both playwrights propose to *show* us, in Stephen's words, the third estate, "the life after death which in itself contains the other," by showing us that the three estates are one. That is to say, in dealing with living characters, they must show us how breezes from that life may blow upon us wherever we may be. To dramatize this, they attempt to *externalize* it, to *show* at least part of what is ordinarily internal and invisible. What they attempt is a large order; and it is a very large order, indeed, when they work within the confinements of modern realism.

Now I hope it is apparent from what I have said about realism and from your own experience of it, that it represents the first estate—"the life of table and chairs, of getting up and sitting down"; and that its usefulness in the theatre is its ability to induce our belief in the stage illusion, the "reality," of the second estate—"the life one lives in one's imaginings, in which one wishes, dreams, remembers." But to attempt to use the two estates to convince us of the stage reality—and, for the doubters in the audience, of the actuality in life—of the third estate is to do something rarely done in realistic theatre, and probably antagonistic to it. Consequently it should not surprise us if one or both of two things should happen. First, the realistic form may crack under the strain put upon it, or the dramatist may be unable to express within it, clearly and convincingly, the multiple levels of reality. This, to my mind, is what happened in *The Cocktail Party*. Second, the dramatist may be forced to depart from realism, as being too limited in its resources to contain his material. As I see it, this is what happened in *Hotel Universe*.

In any play, and I think it is especially important that he do so in plays like these two, the playwright must ask the audience to accept a premise—something in

the action that is set forth beforehand, as introductory or as postulated. Here it is vitally important that the audience understand quite clearly what the premise is; and, also, the author's *rationale* or underlying assumptions. Given these (and, of course, we must be given them in an emotional context), we are prepared for what is to be enacted.

I do not think this premise is ever put to the audience dramatically and clearly in *The Cocktail Party*. It is as if Eliot hoped to solve the problem by evading it altogether; as if he hoped to make us forget about the premise, or come unwittingly to accept it, by involving us in the drama at the realistic level. Yet his tactic at that level is to raise questions in our minds by mystifying us, not about the principal characters—Edward, Lavinia, and Celia, but about the *identities*, motives, and symbolic significance of the Guardians—Sir Henry, Julia, and Alex. We are wittily misled, confused, and deprived of those very facts about the central intrigue that are necessary to our comprehension of it, if we are to appreciate in the theatre the drama it is designed to generate. Having our curiosity set going on this track seriously wrenches focus away from the principals and their valid dilemmas, and toward the puzzlements of plot and oddities of character and conduct of the Guardians—ineffective devices for suggesting the mystery of life and grace. Can it be that Eliot resorted to them, because the realistic mode forced him to keep the action superficially plausible, consistent, and lifelike; at the same time that his symbolic intention, warring with realism, prevented him from going all the way?

The result was that people left the theatre saying, "But what does it *mean*?" And Eliot, pressed for an answer, replied, "It means whatever you take it to mean." Later he conceded, as quoted above, that the spectators' perplexity was at least partly justifiable. An anonymous critic of the *London Times* gave this interpretation, which I think accords well enough with the given dramatic facts: he described the Guardians as being "on one plane of reality accomplished worldlings, on another symbolizing jointly the silent moral self with which the wilful superficial self must sooner or later reckon . . ." But this is wisdom *after* the event: it is not something that you get unmistakably in the theatre, while you are watching the play. The spectator has thus been cheated of a very important part of his playgoing experience—that moment of sudden illumination, when the meaning rises out of the action—or enough of the meaning to give him a coherent and satisfying response.

We shall find curious parallels of this difficulty in *Hotel Universe*; though Barry, by far the more experienced playwright, shows greater awareness of audience psychology and a greater willingness to deal with it in providing that moment of illumination. He is able, too, to mitigate somewhat the constraints of the realistic style; though only at the cost of enormous effort, part of which is spent in counter-acting it, and the rest in departing from it.

In his use of a catalyst, Barry is actually less bold than Eliot. The latter places Sir Henry on stage, though in disguise, at rise of the curtain. Barry keeps Stephen offstage until well past the middle of the play. By that time, all the conflicts within and among the characters have been fully exposed and a point of crisis has been reached. In audience terms, this means that we have become enough involved with



the characters to long for something to happen that will help them break out of their impasse of despair. Only when the characters need Stephen, and we in the audience want him, does Barry bring him into the action.

Even so, Barry does not play quite fair with us. Like Eliot, he misleads us about his catalyst. We are led to expect a man whose mind has given way, presumably because we shall expect and accept strange conduct on the part of a madman. Yet the point of the action is that Stephen is not at all insane, though to "the world" (and to us, at first?) he might seem so. Also, a queer power or influence is attributed to the locale, and we are told strange stories about it—that it has a way of resembling other places, that it can make people resemble other people and make time "go sort of funny," so that people's pasts keep cropping up. In the end, we are informed that these stories are merely old wives' tales and there is no magic about the place. Yet just such things have happened before our eyes. If Barry intended a complex irony, this part of the denouement is treated too cursorily to carry in the theatre. Is this, after all, only Barry working on our nerves under the guise of realism to induce belief in the supernatural events that occur?

In any case, Barry prepares us for these extraordinary events, not so much by creating mystery, but by a carefully graded sequence of incidents (analogous to Eliot's levels of poetic diction?) that progress from the ordinary, to the plausible, to the probable, to the extraordinary, but possible; and, finally, to the plainly supernatural. These fifteen different incidents, ringing all the changes they can on the levels of consciousness and reality, are in themselves a whole course in playwriting; and it is interesting to note that they continue after Stephen makes his appearance, but before the dramatic statement of the premise. When Stephen tells of his mystical experience on this terrace at the moment he contemplated suicide—he had walked back in time, had seen past, present and future life as one, Barry has gone as far as he can go; and he, along with us, must now make the leap into the unknown.

Barry's premise is clear and dramatic. It is put directly to the characters, and through them to us. Stephen says:

Here is the moon at last, you see? Here is our day's reflection, hung in space. . . . Space is an endless sea, and time the waves that swell within one may venture any way one wishes. They seem to be still now—it, advancing and retreating. Now and again the waves are still and quite still. So which way would you go—where would you travel?

And with two important exceptions, each character in turn chooses a road into the past. On the verge of despair, each is offered the mystical experience that will enable him, according to his needs and abilities, "to see his life whole, present and past together in one living instant," and thereby regain a faith in life and a knowledge that all that happens is important.

There we have it: the playwright has explained his rationale and put forth the premise he wishes us to grant him. If we do, well and good; if we do not—well, perhaps we may still continue to watch, even with the spell broken, for the sake of the individual dramas to be re-enacted when these characters, who had become important to us, journey backward in time. Barry has carefully conditioned us for



the moment of illumination. But how persuasive he is in inducing suspension of disbelief, is another matter. Certainly, the audiences I observed contained spectators who were left puzzled by the premise, or unconvinced by the playwright's mystical assumptions. Was it because Barry had misled them by beginning within the realistic mode? Or was it simply that he could readily convince them of this life of chairs and tables, and even of the life of wishes, dreams, remembrance—but not of the life of the spirit? I am not sure.

But I am sure of this: that the theatre is a strange place—possibly because it brings many people together in one room to contemplate an illusion of life. People together generate emotion; and the theatre, like the other arts, communicates by means of emotion. People have nerves, and a fear of the unknown; and these it is relatively easy to excite. So you can appeal more easily to their superstitions, than to their faith; you can make them believe more readily in the reality of magic, than in the reality of miracle—perhaps because they believe more readily in the power of evil than in the workings of grace. But then, is this the fault of the theatre or of the human condition?

### III

It is Lee Simonson's persuasive thesis in *The Stage Is Set* that the history of popular theatre in any culture is toward ever greater and greater realism. This was also true, he says, of the theatre of the Middle Ages, where the production of mysteries and miracles became more and more detailed, literal and photographic; and popular appetite in this regard was apparently insatiable. There was not, however, the same realistic emphasis in dialogue and character-drawing. Nor did the anonymous playwright need to worry about audience-acceptance of his premise or assumptions in dramatizing scenes from the Bible or the lives of the saints. His audience shared his assumptions and needed no premises. They simply expected him to get on with the show, as entertainingly as possible.

The spiritual world is one of the frontiers of drama, according to Una Ellis-Fermor. By this she means, drama is resistant to it. The drama of the spirit is so internal that it is only with difficulty the playwright can find the means to externalize it effectively. But this may not be all there is to the problem. If we lived in a climate of universal belief, we might regard the matter quite differently; but, in our day, the problem is a two-fold one of religion and aesthetics. Certainly, modern drama has been more successful in dealing with man's relation to man, than it has in dealing with man's relation to God. And, considered historically, modern realism was not developed to carry the weight of spiritual or religious drama; still less so, of drama that may seek to convince an audience which, religiously speaking, is not already convinced. So that a playwright, if he attempts to show man's relation to God by writing within the theatrical mode of realism, imperils his own chances of success.

I do not mean to say that it cannot be done. But it takes some doing! And I hope the fact that both Eliot and Barry attempted something we find praiseworthy, will not lull us into finding complete artistic success where it is not. The difficulties of their undertaking, so strangely similar, may teach us more than would a victory that did not aim so high. Abbe Ernest Dimnet once said something about literature in general that surely applies to *The Cocktail Party* and to *Hotel Universe*: "Literature . . . wrestles with life and often gets beaten, but the struggle compels our homage."

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# GOD IN A GARDEN

EUPHEMIA VAN RENSSELAER WYATT

Mr. Graham Greene's latest play, *THE POTTING SHED*, has been variously described as exciting, entertaining; a good detective story; a play about miracles. Actually its theme is the existence of God. For other playwrights a miracle has been a climactic moment of triumph but Mr. Greene's probing imagination has understood that a miracle without the santifying presence of a saint may be something that must be dearly bought. He has conceived the terrifying sequence to specific prayer when man prays without reference to God's will.

The central character in this unusual play is never seen. He is a Mr. Callifer, a professional atheist who is dying upstairs when the curtain rises. "Doubt in Darwin's day was a human liberty" say Mrs. Callifer, but after doubt we knew—"That was when philosophic materialism blighted the Callifer career. His books had ceased to sell, his lectures to draw audience and the once highly popular Callifer Society had shrunk to a few old friends. With Communism fanning out around the globe, atheism was no longer for a select minority. Callifer's invocation of negation, however, has left its mark on his son now a man of thirty-five who finds life so hollow and unprofitable that he has consulted a psychiatrist and has just discovered that his memory begins at his fourteenth year. Whatever happened in that summer of 1925 it was something that closed his parents' hearts to him. When he returns to his father's deathbed, he comes back as a stranger and remains one. His mother not only refuses to let him see his father but herself is deaf to all his questions. What could have happened to James Callifer as a boy of fourteen to cause a mental blackout? This new type of detective story is the search of a man for a soul.

There are two devices contrived by Mr. Greene to help James unravel the mystery. One is his dog. Since Mrs. Callifer dislikes all dogs—"parodies of men" she calls them—this dog is shut up by Mrs. Callifer's grand daughter, Anne, in the potting shed. This places a mysterious emphasis on the potting shed when it appears that James avoids it and admits he won't go there after dark. Anne also discovers something sinister about it. Anne herself is the second device. She is an opinionated child of sixteen who likes to fancy she is a private detective. Anne also supplies the comedy element but as *deus ex machina* she becomes the least plausible character.

Mrs. Wyatt, an honorary life member of the Conference, is drama critic for the *Catholic World*.

With convenient abruptness at the close of ACT I she remembers that she once heard a reference to some strange incident that happened to James in the potting shed when old Potter, now dead, was the gardener. It was Anne who had added a message to James when the family was summoned to Mr. Callifer's deathbed; it is now Anne who sends for Potter's widow. The scene with Mrs. Potter, when James first hears of the miracle is short but striking. It is the build up for the scene when James confronts the uncle he hasn't seen since 1925 — the uncle who is a Catholic priest. Tersely written it is one of the great scenes of modern drama. A scene that leaves the audience silent for a full minute after the curtain falls. In it the mildew of doubt is scraped off two men's souls.

For over thirty years Father Callifer's life has been as barren as James'. For over thirty years he has been performing the parochial functions of a priest but without any love in his heart. In the ugly little rectory of a small town he has been punctilious in the performance of duties so sterile to him that he has taken to secret drinking. For years Father Callifer has forbidden himself to remember how once his prayer had brought his nephew back to life the day that old Potter found the boy hanging in the potting shed. That summer the young priest had brought to James his first news of God. But Mr. Callifer had made such bitter fun of the boy's faith that James in despair had hanged himself. Father Callifer has steeled himself to forget the boy is still alive because a miracle would prove the existence of God. The puzzle to Father Callifer is that if God exists how He could have removed His presence from a priest trying so hard to serve HIM?

"What did you pray?" persists James.

"It's so long ago—I said—I said, "Let him live, God. I love him. Let him live, I will give you anything if you will let him live. I said, "Take away what I love most, Take—take—"

"Take away my faith but let him live?" asks James. And the words that come to James through a haze suddenly illuminate the darkness for the priest. He begins to weep.

"I even forgot what I said to Him until you came," he says to James. "He answered my prayer, didn't He? He took my offer?—Look around you. Look at this room. It makes sense, doesn't it now?" Looking up at a chromo of the Sacred Heart, Father Callifer says "I thought I had lost Him forever."

An objection has been made that God would not take away a spiritual gift for a material favor but it must be remembered that in reality it was James' soul that was at stake and that if Father Callifer had completely lost his faith he would have joined the Callifer Society. Instead he continued to say his prayers every day and celebrate his daily Mass. What he suffered seems to have a forlornly long extension of the "dark night of the soul" which so many saints have found difficult to bear. Young Father Callifer was not a saint but his heart had been full of love for God when he prayed for James. "Perhaps if someone asks with enough love" say James, "He has to give."

The second phase of the miracle affects no one immediately but James and his uncle who is on his knees when James leaves. James returns to his mother's house—a new man in a new world. Immortality enshrouds him. 'God is in his lungs like air.' Marriage has a new aspect now that he can see in Sara "someone who will never die forever." He assures Sara whom he had left that he will not fail her again but Sara, although she loves James, is afraid of things like miracles. She needs time to try to understand.

"I don't believe in this miracle," says Mrs. Callifer.

Mrs. Callifer is such a dominant character that unless she is played by a sensitive actress she can become almost too prominent in the play. She is a less obtrusive Lady Macbeth. The one man woman who can sacrifice everything for her husband—even her son. "Men either form us by their strength or they form us by their weakness" is Mrs. Callifer's comment after her husband's death when she admits that her Henry was never really a leader but relied completely on her protection. It comes as a resounding shock to Mr. Callifer's oldest friend and follower to have Mrs. Callifer announce that her husband had been one person who believed in the miracle from the start. It had never been discussed between them but Mrs. Callifer had realized at once that Henry simply lacked the courage to reverse himself, recall his books and blast his own career. Her cool competence had kept James out of sight so that Henry might never be reminded of the day that God had seen fit to prove His existence in Henry's own garden. Callous to James' agonized appeal she had seen to it that her husband could die without any further intrusion of God into his consciousness. She had loved her Henry even if he was a fake. In fact she kept him once because it kept him completely dependent on her. She would put up with no interference from God. As a 'professional protector' with no one left to protect—because Sara will go back to James and Anne is self sufficient—one wonders what mischief or benevolence the future holds for Mrs. Callifer. She is not a woman to sit still. Lacking the inexorable conscience of Lady Macbeth, Mrs. Callifer's only approach to the admis-

sion of guilt is the confession of her tacit conspiracy with Henry. The only reparation she offers her son is an invitation to stay over the weekend with herself and Sara. It is James who apologetically remarks that a miracle seems worse than a murder case in a family. "I don't believe in this miracle—" Mrs. Callifer comments with epigrammatic flavor, "but I'm not sure any longer. We are none of us sure. When you're not sure, you're alive."

No one has ever accused Mr. Greene of sentiment but he has certainly chosen to present his miracle the hard way. Faith, to him, has no accompaniment of soft music but plenty of dissonance before the final harmony. In Father Callifer's plea to God for his nephew is there perhaps a suggestion of the complete self sacrifice for the love of God without thought of reward upheld by Madame Guyon which led to the great controversy between Fenelon and Bossuet which shook seventeenth century France. Was it Hope and Love which were lost to Father Callifer rather than the Faith which kept him clinging to the skeleton of his creed? That the three cardinal virtues are essential is basic theology.

Like Eliot, Greene brings God to the world about him less wittily than *THE COCKTAIL PARTY* but with forthright drama. *THE POTTING SHED* bears rereading and reviving. It is a springboard for discussion. "I only want a relative truth to make life tolerable," declares the psychiatrist, "Courage can be a very difficult neurosis." Greene has not lacked courage in touching upon the dangerous ground of Father Callifer's temptation. It required not only a fine dramatist but a man of faith.



# DRAMA BOOKSHELF

## TRENDS IN 20th CENTURY DRAMA

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\$7.00

Mr. Lumley discusses playwrights of many styles, schools, and nations. They range from the Italian Luigi Pirandello to the Spaniard Federico Garcia Lorca, from the French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre to the American-born T. S. Eliot. These and many other American, German, French, Danish, and English playwrights are assessed in terms of their background, plays, their acceptance or rejection by the critics as well as the part each played in the evolution of contemporary drama.

Catholic theatre goes and play readers rarely will agree with all of the author's judgments but they will be stimulated to look again and have on hand a reference to such men as:

**EUGENE O'NEILL:** "He was the tallest figure among little men . . . Through his work, however, the American theatre caught up with the European."

**CHRISTOPHER FRY:** "His language has a dazzle which seems to be almost an end in itself."

**JEAN GIRAUDOUX:** "His way is always towards a less sophisticated universe, and his creation of this little world which is more than a world . . . is the testament of a faith which Giraudoux has bequeathed to a world in doubt."

**ARTHUR MILLER and TENNESSEE WILLIAMS:** "... For all their obsessions and pessimism, they are among the most original writers in the theatre today."

Sister Mary Xavier, BVM

## MAN IN HIS THEATRE

Samuel Selden  
The University of North Carolina Press  
Chapel Hill, N. C.  
1957  
\$3.00  
113 pp.

Samuel Selden is a skilled theatre technician and scholar. This latest work, however, is not only disappointing but also irritating inasmuch as it is not concerned with man at all but with a protoplasmic organism; and there is precious little about theatre.

In an attempt to stimulate a new awareness of dramatic forces, he begins his exploration with a study of animal and human behavior. This study yields the premise for his search, namely, the principle of Edward Sinnot that mind and body are simply two aspects of the same biological phenomenon. Man, rated as a feeling organism, is described as striving to exercise his human powers, to preserve them

and extend them. Out of this striving ritual and myth developed, and from the marriage of these two drama emerged as a celebration of and satisfaction of man's "sleepless protoplasmic longings."

Although the author describes myth as a little less earth-rooted than ritual, the spiritual goal beyond sight and sound toward which his heroes of myth have aspired is not a personal God but the impersonal "completed, ideal harmony" postulated by Alfred Whitehead and Herbert Muller.

As the author concedes, strict materialism is losing ground; but the author's mechanistic view of nature is but one feeble step beyond complete materialism. With his limited view of the nature of the human soul, the mores of courage, loyalty, and affection which he deems necessary for the stuff of drama are eviscerated of order and finality and become a part of the very forces of sterility which the author deplores as weakening contemporary drama. "Good" and "evil" (used most frequently in quotation marks by the author) are replaced by nebulous principles of summer and winter, light and darkness. Man's struggle upward is pictured as an ascent toward a state of sunlight and summer. Thus, he considers the theatre to be a temple or a kind of religious exercise leading to ecstasy as the playwright and actor guide men in the struggle from "sin," the sense of inadequacy, to "virtue," a feeling of potency, of protoplasmic fulfilment, controlled and growing.

If theatre is to be served by exploring the nature of drama, as the author suggests, it must await a better basis for exploration than arbitrary evolutionary and biological concepts which strip man of his essential nobility and break his mooring in absolute certitudes. Neither will dramatic art be elucidated by closing one's eyes blandly to the witness of history as Mr. Selden does in his concluding paragraph when he maintains that the fundamental virtues "have little to do with national laws, theoretical philosophies, or dogmatic religions."

Gabriel Stapleton, S.D.S.

#### THEATRE SCENECRAFT

Vern Adix

Children's Theatre Press

1956

\$6.50

(Over 600 line drawings; over 100 photographs)

332 pages

This text by the Art Director of the University of Utah Theatre was illustrated by the author with additional drawings by Robert W. Weideman. Though these line drawings serve to illustrate the methods and tools of stage production, the poor printing and draftsmanship in some instances make the captions and illustrations difficult to follow. The style is readable, often verbose, with frequent allusions to the University of Utah's stage equipment and the University of Iowa's wagon devices. Regretably little space is devoted to the more modern methods of staging such as arena and space staging. The chapter on Special Effects is particularly valuable especially to those in children's theatre who are required to execute magic effects.

The principal value of this text is in the methods of construction which are lavishly detailed. The chapter on color and the psychology of color has splendid material but one wishes that color plates could have been included.

George Herman

## TEN TALENTS IN THE AMERICAN THEATRE

Edited by David H. Stevens

Norman: University of Oklahoma Press

1957

\$4.00

This book brings hope to all those involved in the process of establishing a national theatre in our country. Ten contributors, all of them outstanding professionals of the American theatre, discuss their efforts toward this goal. The uniqueness of these discussions lies in the fact that they are NOT devoted to the Broadway theatre but to community, regional and educational theatre. Among the writers for this book are: Robert E. Gard, professor of drama at the University of Wisconsin, Paul Baker, of Baylor University, Alan Schneider formerly of Catholic University and director of Broadway's "Anastasia" and "The Skin of Our Teeth," Margo Jones, Frederic McConnell of Cleveland Playhouse, Gilmore Brown of Pasadena Playhouse, Barclay Leathem of Western Reserve, Leslie Cheek, Jr. of Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, George Izenour of Yale, and Paul Green. These men discuss such interesting topics as "Theatre for Art's Sake," "Science and the Contemporary Theatre," "Arena Theatre," "Symphonic Drama" and others. Those dedicated to theatre not as a commercial business but as a media for new forms of self-expression and the development of cultural appreciation of theatre will find this book most inspiring.

Jean Miclot

## THE DIRECTOR, THE ACTOR AND THE STAGE

James F. Shaffer

Allied Publishers, Inc.

3rd Floor, Central Building

Portland 5, Oregon

1956

If the stagecraft teacher of the senior high school or the junior college desires a text book which is well organized, informative and devoid of bone-dry presentation of facts, James F. Schaffer's "The Director, The Actor and the Stage" is the answer. Commencing with an introduction to the theatre's "chain of command," the author next presents the stagecraft novice with an adequate, precise glossary of stage terms common to most theatres and used throughout this text. As might be expected the chapters of scenery predominate. These as well as the chapters on properties, costuming, lighting and publicity are made more meaningful by good use of photographs and diagrams. These are made more enjoyable by the clever and humorous illustrations of Jim Doerter. Directives given by the author are clear and readable, and the content is eminently practical. Review questions at the end of each chapter present the teacher with an additional teaching tool. A last, but not to be overlooked item, is the excellent bibliography which deals with all phases of theatre work. This book is intended to be a basic outline of information which the teacher would necessarily supplement. If not chosen as the class text, the book is a must for the reference library. It is of special value to the teacher without theatre background who all of a sudden must direct the class play.

Sister Mary Jeremy, BVM

## Articles

Thomas O. Sloan, "Public Recitation in Japan," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* Vol. XLIII, No. 4 (December, 1957), pp. 394-398.

With the current growth of interest in Reader's Theatre, this article is of special interest inasmuch as it traces the growth of Japanese theatre from the public reciters of Japan. The reciters were an integral part of the puppet-plays and decidedly influenced the development of *Kabuki* drama. Today they are still active in puppet, *Kabuki*, and *Nō* drama and are often featured on radio and television shows. Mr. Sloan's succinct summary of the influence of the reciters on Japanese theatre history is good reading for International Theatre Month which this year focuses on Asiatic drama.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Ionesco," *Realites*, No. 85 (December, 1957), pp. 44-50. This superbly illustrated article provided an introduction to the French theatrical conjuror whose plays survived fiasco to become the subject of critical controversy. In an effort to rediscover true theatre, Ionesco works through the medium of farce underlining the tragic by making it grotesque. His characters are haunted by routine and everyday monotony, "looking for the absolute, perhaps human beings who have been deprived of God." By making his audience laugh rather than weep at the tragic plight of his characters, Ionesco hopes to "push everything to the 'climax where the sources of the tragic lie.'" Along the way he involves his characters in such bizzare situations as the symbolization of anguish and remorse in *Amadee* by a corpse which grows and grows until it finally fills the set. Since the appearance of the article, the lukewarm reception accorded the Phoenix productions of the "The Lesson" and "The Chairs" would seem to indicate that the farce may be too arch and Ionesco's magic wand may need repair. If so, *Realites* cannot claim credit for discovering the flaw.

Alvin Epstein, "The Mime Theatre of Etienne Decroux," *Chrysalis*, Vol. XI, No. 1-2, pp. 3-13.

This is a reprint in view of the visit of Decroux to the States. Apart from the visit, the article is eminently worth reprinting inasmuch as it not only traces the theory and activity of a gifted master of mime but also underscores the importance of body training in the development of the actor. This has particular significance at a time when acting is so often equated with vocal prowess. The article demonstrates that the actor, not the director, is primarily responsible for motivated movement.

G. L. S.

